

**Solitudo**

# Intersections

INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES IN EARLY MODERN CULTURE

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# Solitudo

*Spaces, Places, and Times  
of Solitude in Late Medieval and  
Early Modern Cultures*

*Edited by*

Karl A.E. Enenkel  
Christine Göttler



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## Acknowledgements

A book is never exclusively a product of solitary work, and the creation of this book in particular was the fruit of many discussions and deliberations, both in person and online. The idea to write an interdisciplinary volume dedicated to aspects of solitude in late medieval and early modern Europe emerged in a conversation between the two editors—a historian of Latin literature with an expertise in Petrarch, and an art historian with an interest in the early modern imagery of interiority—in January 2015. From its very beginnings, our project was energised by the social and collaborative contexts in which it evolved. Particularly stimulating was a three-day interdisciplinary conference jointly organised by the two editors at the University of Bern in December 2015. We are indebted to the Institute of Art History of the University of Bern for hosting that conference, which was made possible by substantial support from the Swiss National Science Foundation, the Burgergemeinde Bern, and the Ellen J. Beer Stiftung Bern. Most especially, we would like to thank Michèle Seehafer, a doctoral candidate in art history, for her excellent administration of the 2015 conference that made the three days in Bern not only an intellectually and socially rewarding experience, but also an extremely pleasant one. It is a pleasure to express our sincere gratitude to those colleagues who have so generously volunteered their time and expertise with us over the past few years: Stefan Abel, Isabella Augart, James Clifton, Barbara Baert, Gerlinde Huber-Rebenich, David R. Marshall, Eelco Nagelssmit, Richard Nemec, and Lars Cyril Nørgaard. Christine Göttler also would like to extend her thanks to the colleagues who collaborated with her in the large multi-group research project “The Interior: Art, Space, and Performance (Early Modern to Postmodern)”, funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation from 2012 to 2016: Birgitt Borkopp-Restle, Norberto Gramaccini, Peter W. Marx, Bernd Nicolai, and Peter J. Schneemann. This collaborative project on “interiors” and their complex relationships with exterior spaces in many ways laid the foundation for her contributions to the present volume.

Once more we would like to express our gratitude to our colleagues from the editorial board of *Intersections* for their enthusiastic support and helpful suggestions for improving this volume. Special debts of thanks are also owed to our copy-editor, proofreader, and indexer, Jonathan Hoare, for his consistency, thoughtfulness, and attention to detail; and to Julia Slater, who edited and commented on two of the chapters, for her critical eye and stellar literary skills. Finally, the swift and timely production of the book would not have been possible without the exceptional assistance of two post-doctoral lecturers and

researchers at the University of Bern: Ivo Raband and Steffen Zierholz who checked all of the captions and illustrations and prepared the manuscript for copy-editing. At Brill we were once again fortunate to be able to rely on the expertise and high level of attention to detail provided by Gera van Bedaf and Ivo Romein. Our deepest gratitude goes to the contributors to this book who not only spent numerous solitary hours researching and writing their chapters but whose creative and intellectual pursuits have so greatly enriched it and made it unique.

*The Editors*

Bern, Leiden, and Münster

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## Notes on the Editors

### *Karl A.E. Enenkel*

is Professor of Medieval Latin and Neo-Latin at the University of Münster. Previously he was Professor of Neo-Latin at Leiden University. He is a member of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences. He has published widely on international Humanism, early modern culture, paratexts, literary genres 1300–1600, Neo-Latin emblems, word and image relationships, and the history of scholarship and science. Among his major book publications are *Francesco Petrarca: De vita solitaria, Buch 1* (1991); *Die Erfindung des Menschen: Die Autobiographik des frühneuzeitlichen Humanismus von Petrarca bis Lipsius* (2008); and *Die Stiftung von Autorschaft in der neulateinischen Literatur (ca. 1350–ca. 1650): Zur autorisierenden und wissensvermittelnden Funktion von Widmungen, Vorworttexten, Autorporträts und Dedikationsbildern* (2015). He has (co-)edited and co-authored some thirty volumes on a great variety of topics, among others, *Modelling the Individual: Biography and Portrait in the Renaissance* (1998); *Recreating Ancient History* (2001); *Mundus Emblematicus: Studies in Neo-Latin Emblem Books* (2003); *Cognition and the Book* (2004); *Petrarch and His Readers* (2006); *Early Modern Zoology* (2007); *The Sense of Suffering: Constructions of Physical Pain in Early Modern Culture* (2009); *The Neo-Latin Epigram* (2009); *Meditatio—Refashioning the Self: Theory and Practice in Late Medieval and Early Modern Intellectual Culture* (2011); *Portuguese Humanism* (2011); *The Authority of the Word* (2011); *Discourses of Power: Ideology and Politics in Neo-Latin Literature* (2012); *The Reception of Erasmus* (2013); *Transformation of the Classics* (2013); *Die Vita als Vermittlerin von Wissenschaft und Werk* (2013); *Neo-Latin Commentaries and the Management of Knowledge* (2013); *Zoology in Early Modern Culture* (2014); *Iohannes de Certaldo: Beiträge zu Boccaccios lateinischen Werken und ihrer Wirkung* (2015); *Discourses of Anger in the Early Modern Period* (2015); and *Jesuit Image Theory* (2016). He founded the international series *Intersections* (Brill); *Proteus: Studies in Early Modern Identity Formation*; *Speculum Sanitatis: Studies in Medieval and Early Modern Medical Culture (500–1800)* (both Brepols); and *Scientia universalis: Studien und Texteditionen zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte der Vormoderne* (LIT-Verlag). He is a member of the board of, among others, *Humanistica Lovaniensia*, and the Conseil international pour l'édition des œuvres complètes d'Erasme. Currently he is preparing a critical edition of and a commentary on Erasmus's *Apophthegmata*, books v–viii.

*Christine Göttler*

is Professor emerita of Art History at the University of Bern. Prior to her appointment at the University of Bern, she was Professor and Chair of Art History at the University of Washington, Seattle. Her main research interests are collecting practices, collection spaces, the interactions between the various arts in early modern Europe—especially the Netherlands—and the visual and spatial imagery of interiority and the imagination. She is the author of *Last Things: Art and the Religious Imagination in the Age of Reform* (2010) for which she received a Millard Meiss Publication Award. Her co-edited books include: *Religion and the Senses in Early Modern Europe*, with W. de Boer, *Intersections* 26 (2013); *Trading Values in Early Modern Antwerp*, with B. Ramakers and J. Woodall, *Netherlands Yearbook for History of Art* 64 (2014); *Sites of Mediation: Connected Histories of Places, Processes, and Objects in Europe and Beyond, 1450–1650*, with S. Burghartz and L. Burkart, *Intersections* 47 (2016); *Knowledge and Discernment in the Early Modern Arts*, with S. Dupré (2017); and *The Nomadic Object: The Challenge of World for Early Modern Art*, with M.M. Mochizuki, *Intersections* 53 (2017). She has published widely on diverse topics ranging from Reformation iconoclasm, post-Tridentine spirituality, and the relationship between art, nature, and the senses, to historical aspects of early modern artists' materials (wax, papier-mâché, gold). Her professional awards include fellowships from the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study (Wassenaar), the International Research Centre for Cultural History (Vienna), the Centre for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts (Washington, D.C.), the J. Paul Getty Research Institute (Los Angeles, CA), the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science (Berlin), and the Newberry (Chicago, IL). She is currently preparing a monograph on Hendrick Goltzius's *Allegory of the Arts* (1611) in the Kunstmuseum Basel and a co-authored book (with S. Dupré) entitled *Reading the Inventory: The Worlds and Possessions of the Portuguese Merchant-Banker Emmanuel Ximenez (1564–1632) in Antwerp*. She is also working on a book-length study on interiority and interior spaces in post-Tridentine Europe. She is a member of the editorial board of *Intersections*.

## Notes on the Contributors

### *Oskar Bätschmann*

studied Art History in Zurich and Florence and has held professorships at the Universities of Freiburg im Breisgau (1984–1988), Giessen (1988–1991), and Bern (1991–2009) as well as fellowships and professorships at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (Paris), the Centre for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts (Washington, D.C.), the Institut national d'histoire de l'art (Paris), and the National Normal Taiwan University (Taipeh). From 2001 to 2003 he served as Dean of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Bern. From 1990 to 1991 he was Scholar at the Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities (Santa Monica, CA). He held a Research Professorship at the Swiss Institute for Art Research in Zurich (2009–2012), and he was Rudolf Wittkower Professor at the Biblioteca Hertziana Max Planck Institute for Art History in Rome from 2009 to 2010, and Samuel H. Kress Professor from 2012 to 2013 at the Centre for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts in Washington, D.C. He was an active member of the International Committee for the History of Art (CIHA) from 1996 to 2004, he was a member of the Swiss Academy of the Humanities and the Social Sciences from 1992 to 2015, and he is a member of the Accademia Europea. In 2017, he became an honorary member of the Swiss Academy of the Humanities and the Social Sciences. Currently he is supervisor of the research project “Ferdinand Hodler: Catalogue raisonné of the Paintings”. He has authored monographs on Nicolas Poussin (1993); Ferdinand Hodler (1997, with P. Griener); Giovanni Bellini (2008); Hans Holbein (2014, with P. Griener); and Edouard Manet (2015). Other publications include: *Ausstellungskünstler: Kult und Karriere im modernen Kunstsystem* (1997); *The Artist in the Modern World: The Conflict between Market and Self-Expression* (1997); *Einführung in die kunstgeschichtliche Hermeneutik* (6th ed., 2009); Leon Battista Alberti, *De Statua, De Pictura, Elementa Picturae (Das Standbild, die Malkunst, Grundlagen der Malerei)*, introduced, translated, and annotated by O. Bätschmann and C. Schäublin (2nd ed., 2011); *Benedetto Varchi: Paragone—Rangstreit der Künste*, with T. Weddigen (2013); and Leon Battista Alberti, *Della Pittura: Über die Malkunst*, ed. in collaboration with S. Gianfreda (4th ed., 2014).

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*Ut pictura meditatio: The Meditative Image in Northern Art, 1500–1700* (2012); *Imago Exegetica: Visual Images as Exegetical Instruments, 1400–1700* (2014); *The Anthropomorphic Lens: Anthropomorphism, Microcosmism, and Analogy in Early Modern Thought and Visual Arts* (2014); *Image and Incarnation* (2015); *Personification: Embodying Meaning and Emotion* (2016); *Jesuit Image Theory* (2016); and *Ut pictura amor: The Reflexive Imagery of Love in Artistic Theory and Practice, 1400–1700* (2017). He was elected Foreign Member of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2010. Between 2014 and 2015, he was Chaire Francqui at the Université Catholique de Louvain and the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven. He was awarded the 2016 Distinguished Scholar Award from the American Catholic Historical Association, and was made Scholar in Residence at The Newberry Library (Chicago, IL) in 2017. He is series editor of Brill's *Studies on Art, Art History, and Intellectual History*.

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*Counter-Reformation Diaeta*, 2008). He also does research on the historiography of Italian Seicento art (*Alois Riegl's The Origins of Baroque Art in Rome*, together with A. Hopkins and A. Payne, 2010; and contributions to *Perspective* and the *Journal of Art Historiography*).

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is an Assistant Researcher and Lecturer at the Institute of Art History at the University of Bern. He received his Ph.D. in Art History in 2016 from the University of Bern where he has been a doctoral candidate within the Sinergia project "The Interior: Art, Space, and Performance (Early Modern to Postmodern) (2012–2016)". In his Ph.D. dissertation *Space and Self: Art and Spirituality in the Society of Jesus (1580–1700)* (forthcoming) he explores the relationship between the actually built church interiors and the production of a Jesuit interiority.

# List of Illustrations

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wer&bandnummer=bsb00028235&pimage=172&v=100&nav=&l=nl  
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Engraving. 4°. Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek (Res/L.eleg.m 1347 w-3). Image © Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich, retrieved from <https://bildsuche.digitale-sammlungen.de/index.html?c=viewer&bandnummer=bsb00028235&pimage=173&v=100&nav=&l=nl>  
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Woodcut, 2°. Los Angeles, CA, The Research Library at the Getty Research Institute (QL673.B45 1555). Image © Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, CA, retrieved from [https://archive.org/stream/gri\\_33125008413490#page/n353/mode/2up](https://archive.org/stream/gri_33125008413490#page/n353/mode/2up) 546

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Image © Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Sachsen-Anhalt, Halle, retrieved from <http://digitale.bibliothek.uni-halle.de/vdi6/content/pageview/7240758> (CreativeCommons) 550

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Image © Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek,

Göttingen, retrieved from [http://dfg-viewer.de/show/?tx\\_dlf%5Bpage%5D=38&tx\\_dlf%5Bid%5D=http%3A%2F%2Fgdz.sub.uni-goettingen.de%2Fmets\\_export.php%3FPPN%3DPPN479740488&tx\\_dlf%5Bdouble%5D=0&cHash=f4080699e0071082baade85e5codof23](http://dfg-viewer.de/show/?tx_dlf%5Bpage%5D=38&tx_dlf%5Bid%5D=http%3A%2F%2Fgdz.sub.uni-goettingen.de%2Fmets_export.php%3FPPN%3DPPN479740488&tx_dlf%5Bdouble%5D=0&cHash=f4080699e0071082baade85e5codof23) (CreativeCommons) 552

17.8 Dionisio Minaggio, “Paser Salutari”, Title page to Dionisio Minaggio, *The Feather Book* (1618). Feathers, 30.5 × 47.6 cm. Montreal, McGill University Library. Rare Books and Special Collections (folio ORHQ M66 cutter). Image © McGill University Library, Montreal, retrieved from Wikimedia Commons: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Feather\\_Book\\_of\\_Dionisio\\_Minaggio#/media/File:The\\_Feather\\_Book\\_of\\_Dionisio\\_Minaggio\\_-\\_title\\_page.JPG](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Feather_Book_of_Dionisio_Minaggio#/media/File:The_Feather_Book_of_Dionisio_Minaggio_-_title_page.JPG) (CreativeCommons) 553

# Realms of Solitude in Late Medieval and Early Modern European Cultures: An Introduction

*Christine Göttler*

## Drawing (in) the Wilderness

A drawing executed in brown pen over black chalk by a highly accomplished, most probably Netherlandish artist active between 1480 and 1520, gives a graphic portrayal of the hardships suffered by St. William of Malavalle (d. 1157) during his life as a hermit [Fig. 1.1].<sup>1</sup> St. William, who led a dissolute life as a soldier before his conversion to faith, seems to have had particular significance in the Low Countries around 1500, where he appears in several other works of art too.<sup>2</sup>

In the drawing, St. William is represented three times. In the central foreground, he is introduced as a powerful towering figure holding a halberd and a rosary. To the left he is shown being assailed by an army of devils equipped with spears and flags while, to the right, he is frightening away his aerial attackers with a commanding gesture. Our artist fashioned St. William on the model of St. Anthony the Great, whose endurance of numerous trials inflicted by demons were well known from images and books on the lives of desert saints. Composed in the fourth century in Greek and soon translated into Latin, Athanasius's life of St. Anthony became the core *vita* of the *Vitae patrum*, a collection of biographies of desert fathers that, around 1500, enjoyed renewed popularity in the Netherlands and German-speaking areas.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Pfeifer-Helke T., *Zeichnen im Zeitalter Bruegels: Die niederländischen Zeichnungen des 16. Jahrhunderts*, exh. cat., Kupferstich-Kabinett, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden (Berlin – Munich: 2011) 112, cat. 88. See also footnote 4, below.

<sup>2</sup> A prominent example is Hans Memling's triptych for the Bruges politician Willem Moreel (d. 1501). For St. William and the dissemination of his cult, see my own contribution in this volume, esp. footnote 21.

<sup>3</sup> Lüdke D., “O lieber herr Jesu criste wo warest du do sy mich also geschlügen”: Antonius-Versuchungen in der spätmittelalterlichen Bildkunst”, in Philipp M. (ed.), *Schrecken und Lust: Die Versuchung des heiligen Antonius von Hieronymus Bosch bis Max Ernst*, exh. cat., Bucerius Kunst Forum, Hamburg (Munich: 2008) 30–41; Klein K., “Frühchristliche Eremiten im



FIGURE 1.1 *Master of the Dresden William of Malavalle Drawing* (active ca. 1480–1520),  
St. William of Maleval. *Feather* in brown over black chalk, 19.8 × 28.1 cm. Dresden,  
Kupferstich-Kabinett, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen (inv. no. C 1967–386).  
IMAGE © KUPFERSTICH-KABINETT DRESDEN; PHOTO: HERBERT BOSWANK.

The St. William forms part of a group of seven pen drawings of rocky landscapes, all kept in the Dresden Kupferstich-Kabinett, that on the basis of stylistic criteria and material properties were recently identified as related to each other. Named 'Master of the Dresden William of Malavalle drawing', their unknown Netherlandish creator was a contemporary of Hieronymus Bosch.<sup>4</sup>

Spätmittelalter und in der Reformationszeit: Zu Überlieferung und Rezeption der deutschen 'Vitaspatrum'-Prosa", in Grenzmann L. – Stackmann K. (eds.), *Literatur und Laienbildung im Spätmittelalter und in der Reformationszeit* (Stuttgart: 1984) 686–696; Borchardt D. – Kunze K., "Väterbuch", *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon*, vol. 10 (Berlin – New York, NY: 1999) 164–170.

4 Dietz G. et al., "Der Meister der Dresdner Wilhelm-von-Maleval-Zeichnung: Ein neuer Notname", in Ketelsen T. – Hahn O. – Kuhlmann-Hodick P. (eds.), *Zeichnen im Zeitalter Bruegels: Die niederländischen Zeichnungen des 16. Jahrhunderts im Dresdner Kupferstich-Kabinett—Beiträge zu einer Typologie* (Cologne: 2011) 123–131; Ketelsen T., "Meister der Dresdner Wilhelm von Maleval-Zeichnung", in Neidhardt U. – Krüger K. (eds.), *Das Paradies auf Erden: Flämische Landschaften von Bruegel bis Rubens*, exh. cat., Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden (Dresden: 2016) 94–97.



FIGURE 1.2 *Master of the Dresden William of Malavalle Drawing*, View over a Rocky Cliff toward a Church Tower. *Feather in brown*, 18.9 × 20.7 cm. Dresden, Kupferstich-Kabinett, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen (inv. no. C 3682).

IMAGE © KUPFERSTICH-KABINETT DRESDEN; PHOTO: HERBERT BOSWANK.

The drawings are unique for their time in their focus on rocks and cliffs, set apart compositionally from cityscapes, townships or other settlements in the background. One of the drawings contrasts a mass of rock composed of different strata with several leafless trees and a network of filigree branches extending over the whole page [Fig. 1.2].<sup>5</sup> A flock of birds is visible in the sky, and in the far distance several towers can be discerned. Another one shows two large rocky structures with entrances to caves in the immediate foreground, while the background opens up to a large cityscape, thus mediating the boundaries between wilderness and civilisation [Fig. 1.3].<sup>6</sup> Yet another one offers a view of a fortress squeezed in between two striking vertical structures consisting of

5 Pfeifer-Helke, *Zeichnen im Zeitalter Bruegels* 114, cat. 90; Dietz, “Der Meister der Dresdner Wilhelm-von-Maleval-Zeichnung” 123–131.

6 Pfeifer-Helke, *Zeichnen im Zeitalter Bruegels* 115, cat. 91; Dietz, “Der Meister der Dresdner Wilhelm-von-Maleval-Zeichnung” 123–131.



FIGURE 1.3 *Master of the Dresden William of Malavalle Drawing, Rocks with View toward a Distant City Skyline. Feather in brown over black chalk, 18.8 × 27.8 cm. Dresden, Kupferstich-Kabinett, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen (inv. no. C 3995).*

IMAGE © KUPFERSTICH-KABINETT DRESDEN; PHOTO: HERBERT BOSWANK.

both natural and hewn stones.<sup>7</sup> The roof-like grassy ridge of the second rock serves as a nesting place for dragons, thus associating the view depicted here with a landscape of much earlier times.

Apart from the *St. William* there is only one other work among the Dresden drawings of the Netherlandish master that includes a figure [Fig. 1.4].<sup>8</sup> In a stony recess, a traveller has laid himself down to sleep or rest, crossing his legs and covering his face with his arms and hands. Discernible only at second glance, the sleeper seems to merge with his rocky surroundings. A small path leads to an opening in the rock face. The various figures adorning these and other drawn landscapes may be a gesture toward the artists who, like the hermits, wanderers, sleepers, and dreamers they depicted, were exploring uncharted terrain. Drawing corresponds to a performative, rather than representational,

<sup>7</sup> Pfeifer-Helke, *Zeichnen im Zeitalter Bruegels* 117, cat. 93; Dietz, “Der Meister der Dresdner Wilhelm-von-Maleval-Zeichnung” 123–131.

<sup>8</sup> Pfeifer-Helke, *Zeichnen im Zeitalter Bruegels* 113, cat. 89; Dietz, “Der Meister der Dresdner Wilhelm-von-Maleval-Zeichnung” 123–131.



FIGURE 1.4 *Master of the Dresden William of Malavalle Drawing*, Rocky Landscape with a Sleeping Figure and a City in the Background. *Feather in brown over black chalk*, 14 x 19.4 cm. Dresden, Kupferstich-Kabinett, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen (inv. no. C 4003).

IMAGE © KUPFERSTICH-KABINETT DRESDEN; PHOTO: HERBERT BOSWANK.

act. As Mary Carruthers has pointed out, *ductus*, in medieval and early modern rhetoric, meant both drawing or producing lines and journeying through a composed work (whether verbal, visual, or material).<sup>9</sup> A pen-and-ink drawing by Albrecht Dürer of about the same time plays upon these semantic affinities between drawing and journeying. The tiny figure of a wanderer, sketched in a few almost indiscernible lines, appears at the foot of the impressive rock formation, rendering it even more awe-inspiring; the sketchy castle in the background points up the distance of the mountain solitude from life at court [Fig. 1.5].<sup>10</sup> Christopher S. Wood has suggested that for Altdorfer, Dürer, and

9 Carruthers M., "The Concept of *ductus*, or Journeying Through a Work of Art", in eadem (ed.), *Rhetoric Beyond Words: Delight and Persuasion in the Arts of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: 2010) 190–213. See also Ingold T., *Lines: A Brief History* (London: 2007) 120–151.

10 Hess D., "Nature and Landscape", in Hess D. – Eser T. (eds.), *Der frühe Dürer*, exh. cat., Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg (Nuremberg: 2012) 384, 391, cat. 89;



FIGURE 1.5 Albrecht Dürer, *Cliff Landscape with Wanderer* (ca. 1490/1495). Pen and brown black ink, 22.5 × 31.6 cm. Vienna, Albertina (inv. no. 3055).

IMAGE © ALBERTINA, VIENNA.

their contemporaries who began to explore landscapes and nature around 1500, the wilderness retreat of the hermit could have provided a model for reflecting about their own creative work and the working of their imaginations.<sup>11</sup>

### Interior and Exterior Solitudes

Netherlandish and German artists would have used the words *woestijne/wüste*, *woestenije/wüstenei*, or *wildernisse/wildnis* to describe such solitary places remote from human habitation. *Woestijne*, like the German *wüste* or the English *waste*, is related to the Latin *vastitas*, designating uncultivated, uninhabited, desolate, or barren land. *Woestijne/wüste* and *wildernisse/wildnis* were used

Wood C.S., *Albrecht Altdorfer and the Origins of Landscape* (rev. and expanded 2nd ed. London: 2014) 126.

<sup>11</sup> Wood C.S., “Indoor-Outdoor: The Studio around 1500”, in Cole M. – Pardo M. (eds.), *Inventions of the Studio, Renaissance to Romanticism* (Chapel Hill, NC – London: 2005) 36–72, especially 59–64.

to translate a range of semantically related Latin terms such as *desertum*, *vacuitas*, *solitudo* or *vasta solitudo*, *terra inculta*, *heremus*.<sup>12</sup> In the Old and New Testaments and the writings of the early fathers, *solitudo*—the key term around which the contributions to this book revolve—is frequently used synonymously with *desertum* and the Greek loan word (*h*)*eremus* (ἔρημος). For Jerome, *eremus*, *desertum*, and *solitudo* referred to a place or way of life in contrast to the city and the hustle of urban life, as most radically epitomised by the desert.<sup>13</sup> In the biblical and early Christian imagination, the desert is viewed simultaneously as both a frightening and a heavenly place, a place of trial and temptation and one of divine revelation where spiritual perfection could be found.<sup>14</sup> Jerome, in his famous treatise “On the Preservation of Virginity”, addressed to the young woman Eustochium, describes his desert oratory as surrounded by ‘some hollow valley or rough mountain or precipitous cliff’.<sup>15</sup> In the visual arts, beginning with the hermit paintings of the Trecento, cliffs and rocks continued to indicate the place of the hermit’s desert retreat even when,

<sup>12</sup> Kilianus Cornelius, *Etymologicum Teutonicae Linguae sive Dictionarium Teutonicum-Latinum* (Antverpiae, ex Officina Plantiniana, apud Ioannem Moretum: 1599) 677: ‘Woestijne/woestenije. Eremus, secessus, solitudo, desertum, vasta solitudo, solitudo deserta, locus solitarius, *vulgo* vastina’; 671: ‘Wildernisse/woestijne. Eremus, solitudo, secessus’. See also the entries “wüste”, and “wüstenei”, in *Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob und Wilhelm Grimm: Online-Version*, available from [http://woerterbuchnetz.de/cgi-bin/WBNNetz/wbgui\\_py?sigle=DWB&mode=Vernetzung&hitlist=&patternlist=&lemid=GA00001](http://woerterbuchnetz.de/cgi-bin/WBNNetz/wbgui_py?sigle=DWB&mode=Vernetzung&hitlist=&patternlist=&lemid=GA00001) (accessed: 05.12.2017). Within the context of Netherlandish landscape painting: Bartilla S., “Landschaft und Wildnis im 1600”, in Neidhardt – Krüger, *Das Paradies auf Erden* 46–51.

<sup>13</sup> Rebenich S., *Hieronymus und sein Kreis: Prosopographische und sozialgeschichtliche Untersuchungen* (Stuttgart: 1992) 91–92; Cain A., *The Letters of Jerome: Asceticism, Biblical Exegesis, and the Construction of Christian Authority in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: 2009) 20–25; Driver S.D., *John Cassian and the Reading of Egyptian Monastic Culture* (New York, NY – London: 2002) 48–53.

<sup>14</sup> Gray C. (ed.), *Jerome, Vita Malchi: Introduction, Text, Translation, and Commentary* (Oxford: 2015) 148; Mayer C. (ed.), *Augustinus-Lexikon*, vol. 2 (Basel: 2002) 1086–1092; Lindemann U., “Passende Wüste für Fata Morgana gesucht”: Zur Etymologie und Begriffsgeschichte der fünf lateinischen Wörter für Wüste”, in Lindemann U. – Schmitz-Emans M. (eds.), *Was ist eine Wüste? Interdisziplinäre Annäherungen an einen kulturellen Topos* (Würzburg: 2000) 87–99; Frank K.S., “Wüste”, *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, vol. 9 (Stuttgart: 1999) 382–383.

<sup>15</sup> Eusebius Hieronymus, *Epistulae*, pars 1: *Epistulae 1–LXX*, ed. I. Hilberg, *Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* 54 (rev. ed. Vienna: 1996) 154 (Epistula xxii, 7: Ad Eustochium): ‘Sicubi concava uallium, aspera montium, rupium praerupta cernebam, ibi meae orationi locus, illud miserrimae carnis ergastulum’. I cite from *Select Letters of St. Jerome*, ed. and trans. F.A. Wright (London – New York, NY: 1933) 68–69.

as in the case of Joachim Patinir's *St. Jerome*, the church father's simple hut is located in an otherwise lush landscape [Fig. 1.6]. Jacques Le Goff has convincingly argued that in the medieval west the somewhat alien eastern desert was overlaid and replaced by more familiar wilderness areas such as the forest, mountain top, island, and the sea.<sup>16</sup>

Moreover, the numerous images of St. Jerome reading and writing in the wilderness of his desert retreat testify to how closely the notion of the study room and the desert cave were bound up together [Fig. 1.7].<sup>17</sup> As Jerome himself suggested, the retreat into the wilderness or solitude of the desert could also serve as an image of the retreat into one's own monastic or quasi-monastic cell or chamber of study or even into the innermost chamber of the mind. As for the noblewoman Asella, Jerome noted that she 'sought delight in solitude' and 'found the desert of the monks' in the 'turbulent city' of Rome.<sup>18</sup> Asella's 'desert' refers here, on the one hand, to the small room in her family's home where she imitated the austereities of the desert fathers, and on the other, to the mental retreat she created for herself in her imagination.<sup>19</sup> Reading, writing, and meditating along with other solitary occupations constituted a mental space separate from one's physical surroundings.

The essays assembled in this volume amply document that the anchoritic ideal of withdrawal from the world, in its material and metaphorical dimensions, continued to inspire the imagination in both the religious and secular realms throughout the late medieval and early modern periods. The German

<sup>16</sup> Le Goff J., *L'Imaginaire médiéval: Essais* (Paris: 1985) 59–75 ("Le desert-forêt dans l'Occident médiéval"); Brantley J., *Reading in the Wilderness: Private Devotion and Public Performance in Late Medieval England* (Chicago, IL – London: 2007) 96.

<sup>17</sup> Belting H., "St. Jerome in Venice: Giovanni Bellini and the Dream of Solitary Life", *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance* 17 (2014) 5–33; idem, "Poetry and Painting: Saint Jerome in the Wilderness", in Gasparotto D. (ed.), *Giovanni Bellini: Landscapes of Faith in Renaissance Venice* (Los Angeles, CA: 2017) 25–36. Generally on the problem: Pezeu-Massabuau J., "Habiter seul: Formes et lieux de l'isolement", *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie*, nouvelle série 116 (2004) 165–174.

<sup>18</sup> Hieronymus, *Epistulae*, pars 1, 216 (Epistula xxiv, 4: "Ad Marcellam de uita Asellae"): "[...] sed sana corpore, animo sanior solitudinem putaret esse delicias et in urbe turpida inueniret heremum monachorum". I cite from Driver, *John Cassian and the Reading of Egyptian Monastic Culture* 50–51.

<sup>19</sup> See also Rapp C., "Desert, City, and Countryside in the Early Christian Imagination", in Dijkstra J.H.F. – Van Dyck M. (eds.), *The Encroaching Desert: Egyptian Hagiography and the Medieval West*, Special Issue: Church History and Religious Culture 86 (Leiden: 2006) 93–112.



FIGURE 1.6 Joachim Patinir, *Landscape with St. Jerome* (ca. 1520–1524). Oil on wood, 74 × 91 cm. Madrid, Museo del Prado (inv. no. 1614).  
IMAGE © AKG-IMAGES/ERICH LESSING.

mystic Henry Suso (Heinrich Seuse, d. 1366) decorated his cell with portraits and sayings of anchorites thus transforming it into the desert of early Christianity where he could join the ascetic practices of the fathers.<sup>20</sup> In 1395, the Florentine notary Ser Lapo Mazzei (1350–1412) wrote to a friend that when he 'remain[ed] alone at home, in bed and in my study' he felt 'as happy as the good hermits are on the mountain'.<sup>21</sup> The sheer amount of images of hermits that circulated across various media in Europe and beyond from the fifteenth

<sup>20</sup> Hamburger J., *The Rothschild Canticles: Art and Mysticism in Flanders and the Rhineland circa 1300* (New Haven, CT – London: 1990) 151–152; 242–246.

<sup>21</sup> Guasti C. (ed.), *Lettere di un notaio ad un mercante*, 2 vols. (Bologna: 1880), vol. 1, 87: 'Io mi sto solo in casa nel letto, e nello studio in quella letizia che stavano i romiti buoni nel monte'. I cite from Thornton D., *The Scholar in His Study: Ownership and Experience in Renaissance Italy* (New Haven, CT – London: 1997) 11, 182, note 42.



FIGURE 1.7 Giovanni Bellini, *St. Jerome in the Wilderness* (ca. 1480). Oil on wood, 151 × 113 cm. Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi, Contini Bonacossi Collection (inv. no. C.B. 25).  
IMAGE © AKG-IMAGES/RABATTI & DOMINGIE.

century onwards indicates that an ever increasing number of individuals as well as social and professional groups began to cultivate the persona of the hermit to articulate their own need for solitude in order to pursue specialised and therefore frequently 'secret' knowledge. Historian of science Steven Shapin has suggested that seventeenth-century natural philosophers constructed their own scientific persona in reference to the desert saints who withdrew into the solitude of the innermost desert to achieve unmediated access to the divine.<sup>22</sup>

With the growth of urban areas and other societal changes, notions of solitude experienced a resurgence, but also underwent shifts and transformations. As perhaps best evidenced by Petrarch's *De vita solitaria*, religious, philosophical, literary, and cultural discourses merged to reconstitute the space of solitude as the space of religious, scholarly, and poetic selves. Petrarch (1304–1374) viewed solitude as a site for lively conversation among philosophers, poets, and saints across space and time.<sup>23</sup> Writers from Petrarch to Montaigne (1533–1592), and from Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556) to Francis de Sales (1567–1622), were well aware of techniques—reaching back to late antiquity (Quintilian, Seneca, Augustine)—for creating a space of solitude in the mind, which could be entered anywhere and anytime, even in the midst of noisy crowds. Gadi Algazi has convincingly argued that from the fifteenth century onwards, when it became more common for male scholars to get married and found families, a new habitus of detachment was developed that allowed these scholars to withdraw into their minds to protect themselves against disturbances and noise.<sup>24</sup> Michel de Montaigne's architectural metaphor of the 'arrière-boutique' ('back room') for the inner retreat created in the mind is echoed in Francis de Sales's notion of the 'spiritual retreat' which he advises the female addressee of the *Introduction to the Devout Life* to construct 'in the solitude of your own heart'.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Shapin S., "The Mind Is Its Own Place": Science and Solitude in Seventeenth-century England", in *idem, Never Pure: Historical Studies of Science as if It Was Produced by People with Bodies, Situated in Time, Space, Culture, and Society, and Struggling for Credibility and Authority* (Baltimore, MD: 2010) 119–141.

<sup>23</sup> For Petrarch, see the contribution by Karl A.E. Enenkel in this volume.

<sup>24</sup> Algazi G., "At the Study: Notes on the Production of the Scholarly Self", in Sabean D.W. – Stefanovska M. (eds.), *Space and Self in Early Modern European Cultures* (Toronto: 2012) 17–50; *idem*, "Scholars in Households: Refiguring the Learned Habitus, 1480–1550", *Science in Context* 16, 1/2 (2003) 9–42.

<sup>25</sup> There is a very rich literature to Montaigne's 'arrière-boutique', which cannot be summarised here. See, however: Packwood D., "From *Pictor Philosophicus* to *Homo Oeconomicus*: Renegotiating Social Space in Poussin's Self Portrait of 1649–50", in Sabean – Stefanovska, *Space and Self in Early Modern European Cultures* 51–67. Various

At the same time, authors continued to draw attention to the beneficial effects any forms of physical distancing—from the city, court, and family—would have on the religious, poetic, scholarly, and scientific imagination. Fictional and ‘real’ places of study and solitude such as Pliny’s ‘diaeta’, Quintilian’s ‘clausum cubiculum’, and Petrarch’s retreat at Vaucluse played an instrumental role in the emergence and development of the Renaissance *studiolo* as a space of study. Ignatius of Loyola, in the introduction to his *Spiritual Exercises* of 1548, reminds the practitioner of mental prayer that ‘he will, ordinarily, more benefit himself, the more he separates himself from all friends and acquaintances and from all earthly care, as by changing from the house where he was dwelling, and taking another house or room to live in, in as much privacy as he can’.<sup>26</sup> The increase in meditation practices led to a marked diversification of conceptual, imaginary, and physical spaces for solitary religious activities such as reading and prayer.<sup>27</sup> The four hermit series engraved by the brothers Jan I and

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scholars have pointed to the increasing desire for quiet spaces reserved for solitary activities among members of the urban elites. See Hollander M., *An Entrance for the Eyes: Space and Meaning in Seventeenth Century Dutch Art* (Berkeley, CA – Los Angeles, CA: 2002), especially 177–184. For the affinity between Michel de Montaigne and Francis de Sales see Lyon J.D., *Before Imagination: Embodied Thought from Montaigne to Rousseau* (Stanford, CA: 2005) 59–60; for Montaigne: *ibidem* 58–60; for de Sales: *ibidem* 61–93.

<sup>26</sup> Ignatius de Loyola, *Exercitia Spiritualia*, ed. I. Calveras – D. de Dalmases, *Monumenta Ignatiana*, ser. secunda: *Exercitia Spiritualia S. Ignatii de Loyola et eorum directoria 1* (Rome: 1969) 160–162 (Versio Vulgata): ‘In quibus (secundum successum communiorem) tanto maiorem faciet progressum spiritualis vitae, quanto magis ab amicis notisque omnibus et ab omni rerum humanarum solicitudine sese abduxerit; ut si ab aedibus pristinis migret in domum cellam aliquam secretiorem [...]’; Fleming D.L., *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius: A Literal Translation and a Contemporary Reading* (St. Louis, MO: 1978) 16–18 [20].

<sup>27</sup> The acquisition of private chapels was of course already greatly promoted by the mendicant orders from the late thirteenth century onwards. The rich literature on the privatisation of liturgical space, especially in Florence, includes: Katz Nelson J. – Zeckhauser R.J., ‘Private Chapels in Florence: A Paradise of Signalers’, in *eidem* (eds.), *The Patron’s Payoff: Conspicuous Commissions in Italian Art* (Princeton, NJ: 2008) 113–132; Goldthwaite R.A., *The Building of Renaissance Florence: An Economic and Social History* (Baltimore, MD – London: 1980), especially 98–102. For the Medici: Lillie A., ‘The Patronage of Villa Chapels and Oratories Near Florence: A Typology of Private Religion’, in Marchand E. – Wright A. (eds.), *With and Without the Medici* (Aldershot: 1998) 19–46. For Rome: Barry F., ‘Pray to Thy Father which is in Secret’: The Tradition of *coretti*, *romitorii* and Lanfranco’s Hermit Cycle at the Palazzo Farnese”, in Imorde J. – Neumeyer F. – Weddigen T. (eds.), *Barocke Inszenierung* (Emsdetten: 1999) 190–221.



FIGURE 1.8 Adriaen Collaert after Jan van der Straet, Plate 4, "Ferdinand Magellan on His Ship", from *Americae Retectio* (ca. 1589). Engraving, 20.9 x 27.4 cm. London, The British Museum (inv. no. 1869,0213.224).

IMAGE © THE BRITISH MUSEUM, LONDON.

Raphael I Sadeler after designs by Antwerp's most prominent draughtsman Maarten de Vos (1532–1603), published in Frankfurt (1585?), Munich (1594), and Venice (1598 and 1600), demonstrate this remarkable upsurge in interest in the material and spatial dimensions of solitude that also lies at the core of this book.<sup>28</sup> Their evocative titles—*Solitudo*, *Sylvae sacrae*, *Trophaeum vitae solitariae*, *Oraculum anachoreticum*—explore the material and metaphorical imageries of solitude while delighting the eyes of their viewers with a variety of landscapes and interior spaces for penitential, devotional, and scholarly pursuits, such as caves, huts, and hollow trees.<sup>29</sup> The fact that shortly before his

28 For Spain, see Roe J., "The Hermit's *locus amoenus*: 'El arte y moral filosofia' of Landscape Painting Collections in Early Seventeenth Century Madrid", *Matèria, revista d'art* 8 (2014) 15–36.

29 For a more expanded discussion of the four hermit series of the Sadeler brothers, see Göttler C., "The Art of Solitude: Environments of Prayer at the Bavarian Court of



FIGURE 1.9 *Jan Collaert the Younger after Jan van der Straet, Plate 2, "The Invention of the Magnetic Compass"* from *Nova Reperta* (ca. 1590). Engraving, 20.5 × 26.8 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (inv. no. RP-P-1904-1029).  
IMAGE © RIJKSMUSEUM, AMSTERDAM.

death Maarten de Vos contributed the drawings for a fifth series with twenty-four female hermit saints, engraved mostly by Adriaen (ca. 1560–1618) and Jan II Collaert (ca. 1561–ca. 1620) and published in Antwerp, points to the leading role women had played in the long history of Christian ascetic practices.<sup>30</sup>

Wilhelm v", in Heal B. – Koerner J.L. (eds.), *Art and Religious Reform in Early Modern Europe*, Art History 40 (Oxford: 2017) 404–429, esp. 415–418; see also Figs. 5.7–5.15 of my contribution in this volume.

<sup>30</sup> Schuckman C., *Maarten de Vos*, ed. D. De Hoop Scheffer, 3 vols., Hollstein's Dutch and Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts 44–46 (Rotterdam: 1995–1996), vol. 1, 197–202, nos. 921–945; vol. 3, 59–63, nos. 921–945; Diels A. – Leesberg M., *The Collaert Dynasty*, ed. M. Leesberg – A. Balis, 8 vols., The New Hollstein Dutch and Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts (Ouderkerk aan den IJssel: 2005–2006), vol. 4, 12–37, nos. 766–790. For female ascetics in the fourth century, see Elm S., *Virgins of God: The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: 1994).



FIGURE 1.10 *Jan Collaert the Younger after Jan van der Straet, Plate 18, "Amerigo Vespucci Discovering the Southern Cross", from Nova Reperta (ca. 1590). Engraving, 19.9 x 27.9 cm. London, The British Museum (inv. no. 1907, n21.5).*  
 IMAGE © THE BRITISH MUSEUM, LONDON.

In close conjunction with the hermit's retreat, the scholar's study, in turn, became the model upon which other places of (mostly) solitary inquiry were constructed, including the artist's and artisan's workshop, the alchemist's laboratory, and the astronomer's or navigator's observatory outdoors or on board a ship. Jan van der Straet (1523–1605), in the *Americae Rerectio* series, published in the late 1580s, portrays the Portuguese navigator Ferdinand Magellan in full armour studying an armillary sphere on board a ship on the high seas, seemingly unaware of the fantastical and threatening scene evolving around him [Fig. 1.8].<sup>31</sup> Published in at least four editions by the firm of Philips, Theodoor, and Johannes Galle in Antwerp between 1591 and 1638, Jan van der Straet's *Nova Reperta* series consists of a title page and nineteen plates featuring scientific discoveries and technological inventions. Whereas most of the plates depict collaborative pursuits in crowded workshops, laboratories, or studios,

<sup>31</sup> Markey L., "Stradano's Allegorical Invention of the Americas in Late Sixteenth-Century Florence", *Renaissance Quarterly* 65 (2012) 385–442, especially 429–431.



FIGURE 1.11 Anon. engraver after Jan van der Straet, Plate 7, "Distillatio", from *Nova Reperta* (ca. 1590). Engraving, 20.4 × 26.8 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (inv. no. RP-P-1944-1037).  
IMAGE © RIJKSMUSEUM, AMSTERDAM.

solitary modes of acquiring knowledge are also shown.<sup>32</sup> Flavio Gioia, the supposed inventor of the magnetic compass, busies himself with navigational science in a study and bedroom filled with mathematical instruments; following the traditional iconography of scholars, he has a sleeping dog at his side [Fig. 1.9].<sup>33</sup> Amerigo Vespucci carries out his night-time observations of the southern sky alone on a shore, while his three companions have all fallen asleep [Fig. 1.10]. In the crowded space depicted in the scene dedicated to alchemical distil-

<sup>32</sup> Margócsy D., "Stradanus (Jan van de Straet)", in Dackerman S. (ed.), *Prints and the Pursuit of Knowledge in Early Modern Europe*, exh. cat., Harvard Art Museum (Cambridge, MA: 2011) 38–45; Davis L., "Color Olivi: Van Eyck's Workshop as a Site of Discovery and Transformation in Jan van der Straet's 'Nova Reperta'", in Perry Chapman H. – Woodall J. (eds.), *Envisioning the Artist in the Early Modern Netherlands*, Netherlands Yearbook for History of Art 59 (Leiden: 2009) 225–249.

<sup>33</sup> For the sleeping dog in the study of the scholar, see Algazi, "At the Study" 28–34.

lation, two men are studying a passage in a book on the subject, thus linking the collaborative workshop culture with the solitary mode of the scholar's work [Fig. 1.11]. As Michael Cole and Mary Pardo have suggested, the increase in representations of the artist's studio from the late sixteenth century onwards does not necessarily reflect the early modern conditions of the workshop, which was generally a collaborative space, but rather points to the artists' ambitions to fashion themselves as scholars and philosophers and thus raise their own social status.<sup>34</sup>

### Spaces, Places, and Times of Solitude

The chapters in this volume investigate the imageries and imaginaries of outdoor and indoor spaces associated with solitary practices such as reading, writing, studying, meditating, and praying in the late medieval and early modern periods. The core interest of the book lies in exploring the spatial, material, and affective dimensions of solitude, which have so far received only scant attention.<sup>35</sup> Its focus is on the dynamic and relational qualities of 'space' and 'place', which are here understood as being shaped, structured, and imbued with meaning through both social and discursive practices.<sup>36</sup> Interestingly, despite the ever-increasing literature on the social, physical, metaphorical, textual, and visual implications of space published in the aftermath of the so-called spatial turn, there are still relatively few studies that engage with the history of

34 Cole M. – Pardo M., "Origins of the Studio", in eidem (ed.), *Inventions of the Studio* 1–35.

35 More recent exemplary studies include: Algazi, "At the Study"; idem, "Scholars in Households"; Macho T., "Mit sich allein. Einsamkeit als Kulturtechnik", in Assmann A. – Assmann J. (eds.), *Einsamkeit*, Archäologie der literarischen Kommunikation 6 (Munich: 2000) 27–44; Shapin, "The Mind Is Its Own Place". For the modern and contemporary periods: Bergmann I. – Hippler S. (eds.), *Cultures of Solitude: Loneliness—Limitation—Liberation* (Frankfurt am Main: 2017).

36 For an inspiring perspective from social and cultural theory: Reckwitz A., "Affective Spaces: A Praxeological Outlook", *Rethinking History* 16 (2012) 241–258. Older foundational literature includes: Bachelard G., *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston, MA: 1994 [*La poétique de l'espace*, 1958]); Lefebvre H., *The Production of Space*, trans. D. Nicholson Smith (Oxford: 2005 [*La production de l'espace*, 1974]) 36–46; Certeau M. de, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. S. Rendall (Berkeley, CA – London: 1988; *L'Invention du quotidien* 1: Arts de faire, 1990) 91–110; Soja E.W., *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Cambridge, MA: 1996). See also Koch E. – Schlie H., "Einleitung", in eaedem (eds.), *Orte der Imagination—Räume des Affekts: Die mediale Formierung des Sakralen* (Paderborn: 2016) 9–18.

premodern 'spatial practices' or of representations and experiences of space.<sup>37</sup> Recent studies have modified Michel Foucault's distinction between hierarchically ordered 'premodern' and more fluid and flexible 'modern' conceptions of space—the latter originating in Galileo's discovery of 'infinite space'—by pointing to performative acts, such as the processions that transformed both the spaces and the participants of these events.<sup>38</sup> In addition, several authors have challenged the binary opposition between place and space either by suggesting triangular relational terms or by emphasising the dynamic qualities of place.<sup>39</sup> Last but not least, a number of essays have suggested that solitude, in the late medieval and early modern periods, was formed not only spatially, but also temporally: Petrarch, in the second book of *De vita solitaria*, distinguishes between three types of solitude: solitude of place ('solitudo loci'), solitude of time ('solitudo temporis'), and solitude of mind ('solitudo animi'). The night, in particular, allows for passing time in solitude.<sup>40</sup> Quintilian, long before, had

37 See, most recently: Lajer-Burcharth E. – Söntgen B. (eds.), *Interiors and Interiority* (Berlin – Boston, MA: 2016); Stock M. – Vöhringer N. (eds.), *Spatial Practices: Medieval/Modern*, Transatlantic Studies on Medieval and Early Modern Literature and Culture (Göttingen: 2014); Sabean – Stefanovska, *Space and Self in Early Modern European Cultures*; Lechtermann C. – Wagner K. – Wenzel H. (eds.), *Möglichkeitsräume: Zur Performativität von sensorischer Wahrnehmung* (Berlin: 2007); Webb D., *Privacy and Solitude in the Middle Ages* (London – New York, NY: 2007). Recent studies on the spatial turn include: Bachmann-Medick D., *Cultural Turns: New Orientations in the Study of Culture*, trans. A. Blauhut (Berlin – Boston, MA: 2016) 211–244. "The Spatial Turn"; Hubbard P. – Kitchin R. (eds.), *Key Thinkers on Space and Place* (2nd ed. London: 2011); Günzel S. (ed.), *Raum: Ein interdisziplinäres Handbuch* (Stuttgart: 2010); Döring J. – Thielmann T. (eds.), *Spatial Turn: Das Raumparadigma in den Kultur- und Sozialwissenschaften* (2nd ed. Bielefeld: 2008) 11–32.

38 Foucault M., "Of Other Spaces", trans. J. Miskowiec, *Diacritics* 16 (1986) 22–27. Originally presented as a lecture in March 1967, the manuscript was first published as "Des espaces autres", *Architecture, mouvement, continuité* 5 (1984) 46–49. Stock M. – Vöhringer N., "Spatial Practices, Medieval/Modern", in *eidem, Spatial Practices: Medieval/Modern* 7–24.

39 Michel de Certeau distinguishes between 'place' (associated with 'stability') and 'space' (a 'place' transformed by practices such as walking, reading, etc.): De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* 117–118. For a discussion of De Certeau's dyadic approach, see Mitchell W.J.T., "Preface to the Second Edition of *Landscape and Power: Space, Place, and Landscape*", in *eidem* (ed.), *Landscape and Power* (2nd ed. Chicago, IL – London: 2002) vii–xii. See also Agnew J.A., "Space and Place", in Agnew J.A. – Livingstone D.N., *The SAGE Handbook of Geographical Knowledge* (Los Angeles, CA: 2011) 316–330; Wilken R. – Goggin G., "Mobilizing Place: Conceptual Currents and Controversies", in *eidem* (eds.), *Mobile Technology and Place* (New York, NY – London: 2012) 3–25.

40 Petrarcha, *Prose*, ed. G. Martellotti (Milan – Naples: 1955) 454: 'Triplex nempe, si rite complector, solitudo est: loci scilicet, de qua maxime michi nunc sermo susceptus est;

encouraged the writer who possessed good health to 'seclude himself in the silence of the night, within closed doors, with but a solitary lamp to light his labours'.<sup>41</sup> In the liturgical year, Lent was considered the time for prayer and silence. And, finally, a great many of the hermits lived to an astonishingly old age; as a consequence, ascetic practice was generally associated with old age.

Focusing on representative case studies, the contributions to this volume examine the ways in which the space of solitude was conceived of, constructed, imagined, and represented within changing cultural contexts throughout the late medieval and early modern periods. Several chapters are concerned with visual, spatial, and metaphorical topographies of the desert (*desertum*), the forest (*silva*), and other places of solitude and retreat that often encompass a variety of conflicting elements and may be described as both a *locus asper* and a *locus aemonus*.<sup>42</sup> Others are interested in the connections and ambiguities between interior spaces and interiority, or between solitude and sociability,<sup>43</sup> in the construction and representation of 'sacred solitude' (*sacra solitudo*) by competing monastic orders and religious groups (including Franciscans, Dominicans, Cistercians),<sup>44</sup> and the role and meaning of solitude in the meditation on the Passion of Christ.<sup>45</sup> Several contributions stress how solitude remained an ambiguous and even contested term. One of the fiercest enemies of both monastic solitude and the imitation of solitary practices by laymen and laywomen was Martin Luther (1483–1546).<sup>46</sup> Luther was particularly concerned about the negative way in which solitude, melancholy, and sin feed into each other, provocatively equating the physical place

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temporis, qualis est noctium, quando etiam in rostris solitudo silentiumque est; animi, qualis est eorum, qui vi profundissime contemplationis abstracti luce media et frequenti foro, quid illic geratur, nesciunt, qui, quotiens et ubicunque voluerint, soli sunt'. Cited and discussed by Karl A.E. Enenkel in this volume ("Petrarch's Constructions of the Sacred Solitary Place in *De vita solitaria* and Other Writings"), note 5.

41 Quintilian, *The Institutio oratoria*, trans. H.E. Butler, vol. 4 (London – Cambridge, MA: 1979) 104–105 (10.3.25): 'Ideoque lucubrantes silentium noctis et clausum cubiculum et lumen unum velut tectos maxime teneat'.

42 See the contributions by Karl A.E. Enenkel (on Petrarch), Christine Göttler, Agnès Guiderdoni, Oskar Bätschmann, and Steffen Zierholz.

43 See the contributions by Christiane J. Hessler, Arnold A. Witte, and Marie Theres Stauffer.

44 See the contributions by Dominic E. Delarue, Raphaële Preisinger, Carla Benzan, and Mette Birkedal Bruun.

45 See, most especially, the contribution by Walter S. Melion.

46 For the Catholic response to the Protestant attack on monastic solitude, see, most especially, the contribution by Karl A.E. Enenkel (on Cornelius Musius).

of solitude (*locus solitudinis*) with the place of sin (*locus peccati*).<sup>47</sup> Luther used 'solitudo' or 'Einsamkeit' synonymously with 'melancholia', 'tristitia' (sadness), 'Furcht' (fear), 'Schwermut' (gloom), and 'Traurigkeit' (sadness), and recommended sociability as a remedy against these negative feelings.<sup>48</sup> Finally, the intersecting semantic fields associated with the word *solitudo* also excited the antiquarian and natural philosophical imagination.

### The Contributions

This book has been divided into five closely interrelated parts. *Part 1* ("Solitude in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Foundations, Shifts, and Transformations") introduces representative figures who, at crucial historical moments, both motivated and responded to shifts in notions and conceptions of solitude and community, the self and the social world. Among the figures who fashioned themselves as *solitarii*—in the sense of living and acting on one's own—the celebrated 'poet laureate' and scholar Petrarch exerted by far the greatest impact in various domains. Although he spent most of his time at the papal court in Avignon, his rural retreat in the 'closed valley' of Vaucluse became the 'sacred solitary place' of his inspired writing; he transformed it into an 'alternative world' in contrast to the corrupt world of Avignon (termed by him 'hell on earth'). As Karl A.E. Enenkel shows in his close reading of *De vita solitaria (On the Solitary Life)* and other writings, Petrarch's solitude afforded him the freedom (*otium*) to engage in conversation with his most cherished authors, writers like Cicero and Seneca, Virgil and Horace, and the Church Fathers. For Petrarch, solitude meant self-awareness, self-assertion, and self-authorisation as a poet and writer, for he believed that the source of inspiration lies within oneself.

In the course of the sixteenth century, monasticism with its demands of solitude, silence, and celibacy was strongly contested by the Reformation. The Delft priest Cornelius Musius (1500–1572) directly responded to that challenge with his 1566 poem *Solitudo sive vita solitaria laudata (Solitude or the Prized Solitary Life)*. Drawing on Petrarch's *De vita solitaria* but adding his own thoughts nourished by the religious debates, Musius's little-studied poem sees the institutionalised monk rather than the poet or writer as the model *solitary*; consequently, he accuses the Protestant opponents of monasticism of

<sup>47</sup> Martin Luther, *Tischreden Oder Colloquia*, ed. Johann Aurifaber (Eisleben, Urban Gaubisch: 1566), fols. 319r, 329v, 330r. See also Göttler, "The Art of Solitude" 405–406.

<sup>48</sup> Mennecke-Haustein U., *Luthers Trostbriefe* (Heidelberg: 1989) 242–247.

following the immoral rules of a sinful world. As Enenkel demonstrates, Musius conceived his poem as an (ultimately unsuccessful) attempt to strengthen orthodoxy in difficult times.

The exemplary practitioners of a holy solitary life were the fathers and mothers of the Egyptian, Syrian, and Palestinian deserts, as most famously described in the *Vitae patrum*, a collection of *vitae* of these early Christian hermits that circulated widely in various languages and compilations. Among its most prominent readers was the Dominican scholar and archbishop of Genoa Jacobus de Voragine (1228/29–1298), whose own *Legenda aurea* became, in turn, the most important source of hagiographic knowledge until far into the early modern period. In his essay, Dominic E. Delarue focuses on a hitherto little researched aspect of this popular collection of saints' lives: its role in the promulgation of different modes of solitary life in response to a growing interest in hermits and solitaries. Despite his effort to reduce the number of saints compared to other legendaries, Jacobus added the lives of five desert fathers at the end of the liturgical year; he also referred to solitude as an underlying theme in a number of lives of male and female saints. The *Legenda aurea* thus helped to shape a more sophisticated idea of anachoretic solitude suitable for the needs of religious professionals and lay people alike.

At the turn of the seventeenth century, the increase in (Jesuit) meditation practices led to a marked interest in and diversification of conceptual and physical spaces of solitary prayer and religious study. A unique project to revive and redefine religious eremitism within an explicitly courtly and Counter-Reformation context is discussed by Christine Göttler. Her focus is on the large estate at Schleissheim, created by Wilhelm v of Bavaria (1548–1626) after his (forced) abdication: it consisted of a manor house with one major chapel plus eight other chapels—adorned with sacred automata—attached to hermitages surrounding the central complex. As she argues, Duke Wilhelm's attempts to transform Schleissheim into a 'sacred landscape' went hand in hand with the transformation of the site's natural agricultural resources into dynastic wealth and the assertion of territorial and political claims. While the land at Schleissheim was used for agricultural, leisure, and spiritual pursuits, a poem accompanying a series of hermit saints engraved by the Sadelers and dedicated to the duke draws a parallel between the hermits' efforts at working the land, and the work of the two engravers in restoring the dwellings of men beloved by God.

There are multiple ways to create solitude by distancing oneself either spatially or internally from the world. The latter dimension of solitude, constructed by means of both the external and internal senses, is the focus of *Part 2* ("Solitude in the Pictorial and Emblematic Imagination"). The three essays assembled

under this heading consider various settings, formats, and media used to draw different audiences into the practice of affective prayer and meditation. The increasing importance of the anachoretic ideal in urban centers throughout Italy is investigated by Raphaële Preisinger. Important societal changes led to a rise in popularity of a spiritual model based on Cistercian religiosity, making private devotion a surrogate for an actual life *in eremo*. Promoted by both Franciscans and Dominicans in competition with each other, this anachoretic ideal led to the emergence of new iconographies and visual strategies. Large murals re-creating a mnemotechnical scheme that had been developed in St. Bonaventure's *Lignum vitae* played a significant role in promoting a specific Franciscan spirituality, for which St. Francis's stigmatisation on the grounds of Mount Alverna acquired paradigmatic significance. The success of these murals inspired the competing Dominicans to present their order's founder in a similar light, developing the Franciscan iconography of contemplative vision into a striking and memorable imagery that afforded St. Dominic seraphic powers originally reserved for St. Francis.

The following two essays concern different uses of religious emblematic imagery as an aid to construct an internal and imaginary place of retreat. Taking as her point of departure Francis de Sales's concept of mental retreat as developed in his *Introduction to the Devout Life*, Agnès Guiderdoni elaborates on the representation of spiritual solitude in meditative emblematics in the Spanish Netherlands and France. After discussing the emphasis placed on interior and internal spaces by the Jesuit Louis Richeome (1544–1625) who, in his *Tableaux sacrez* of 1601, describes how to adorn a (mental) oratory with tapestries, Guiderdoni reconsiders the numerous adaptations and variations of an earlier attempt to give visual expression to the material quality of the oratory of the soul. Engraved by Anton II Wierix in Antwerp around 1586, the *Cor Jesu amanti sacrum* series illustrates in a graphic manner the ways in which the heart or mental oratory is open to adornment, alteration, and manipulation. Rather than offering a tool for methodical and structured meditation, the series invites the reader and viewer to engage in the more experiential way of the heart, in other words, to experience the heart as a place of transformation in accordance with the allegorical imagery of mystical discourse.

The emblem books created by the renowned Jesuit preacher Jan David (1546–1613), and printed by the Plantin firm in Antwerp between 1601 and 1610, initiated an entirely new genre of scriptural exegesis, based on closely intertwined visual and textual materials. Novel in format, structure, and design, the emblem books written by David in close collaboration with the Galle workshop, especially Theodoor Galle, also addressed a newly emerging group of readers possessing both exegetical competence and visual, linguistic, and

literary skills. The focus of Walter S. Melion's essay are two groups of emblems in David's *Messis myrrhae et aromatum ex instrumentis ac mysterijs Passionis Christi* (*Harvest of Myrrh and Spices [Gathered] from the Instruments and Mysteries of Christ's Passion*) that engage with the solitude experienced by Christ during the agony in the garden, the carrying of the cross, and the meditation on the events of the Passion. Melion demonstrates how David understood meditative solitude as a powerfully generative devotional practice that turned the soul's penitential isolation into an instrument of communitarian consolation and its aridity into a lush garden fertilised by the blood of Christ's Passion.

*Part 3* ("Landscapes of Solitude") discusses the imagery and imagination of landscapes that in the European tradition served as sites for the practice of sacred solitude: the secluded ground of Mount Alverna, the place of St. Francis's prayer, meditation, and spiritual elevation; the physical and imaginary landscapes linked to the ascetic practices of St. Catherine of Siena (1347–1380) and St. Mary Magdalene, her unsurpassable role model; and the Sacro Monte at Varallo under the administration of Bishop Carlo Bascapè (1550–1615), who worked tirelessly to reconceive the well-known pilgrimage site as a new kind of 'solitary place for contemplation' ('luogo solitario et di contemplatione'). Oskar Bätschmann offers a fresh look at the intriguing iconography of Giovanni Bellini's *St. Francis* in the Frick Collection, described by Marcantonio Michiel as 'La tavola del San Francesco nel deserto'. Taking seriously the judgement of this learned collector and connoisseur Bätschmann places the painting in the context of some of the key representational problems preoccupying Bellini and his fellow artists at that time. These include the visual representation of light (including heavenly light), sound and the relationship between them, and the broad referential and symbolic meanings of a (depicted) landscape to which Michiel's description alludes. Bellini's landscapes represent pivotal moments in the development of this new genre and in a naturalism based on the artist's power of invention and imagination.

Steffen Zierholz explores the landscape paintings with Mary Magdalene and Catherine of Siena on the side walls of the private chapel of the Dominican prior Fra Mariano Fetti (1460–1531) in San Silvestro al Quirinale in Rome, produced by Polidoro da Caravaggio between 1524 and 1527. In Dominican writings, Mary Magdalene and Catherine of Siena are generally introduced as embodying related, but nonetheless different, models of solitude and withdrawal: while Mary Magdalene led a 'real' penitent life in the solitude of a cave, Catherine of Siena created for herself an 'inner cell' where she could retreat at any time into the solitude of her soul. The fresco with St. Catherine offers an alternative model to the physical withdrawal that was adapted to the specific

ideals of the Dominican 'vita mixta'. Interestingly, in both frescoes, the sites of religious contemplation are characterised as wilderness areas, despite the fact that St. Catherine's vita described her retreat as an interior space.

The focus of Carla Benzan's essay is the under-researched chapel of the *Transfiguration of Christ* at the highest point of the Sacro Monte di Varallo that contains an enormous sculptural representation of Mount Tabor—the site of Christ's miraculous revelation of his divine nature and form. In the exegetical literature, the event is linked to both spiritual blindness and the promise of the restoration of spiritual knowledge and sight. Benzan argues that Varallo's Mount Tabor, viewed by the pilgrim from behind a screen, solicited an alternative and more complex kind of solitary reflection than the palaces of the Passion assembled around the central piazza. The purpose of pilgrimage to the chapel of the *Transfiguration* depended on a new kind of imaginative ascetic activity: the labour of the imagination that complemented and partially supplanted the physical performance of piety stimulated by the chapel's decoration.

The idea of solitude is not only linked to an array of uninhabited, unfrequented, or remote outdoor places, but also led to ongoing experimentation with buildings and spaces that allowed for the desire for seclusion, withdrawal, and privacy and even reinforced it. *Part 4* ("Architectures of Solitude") is introduced by a well-known, but highly idiosyncratic and unique interior directly related to a period of mourning, the desire for solitude, and reflection. In her nuanced interpretation of Duke Federico da Montefeltro's *studio* at the Palazzo Ducale in Urbino, Christiane J. Hessler focuses on one aspect that has so far not been sufficiently taken into account in the art historical literature: the fact that the duke commissioned the *studio* during a period of intense bereavement following the loss of his beloved wife Battista Sforza (ca. 1446–1472) and his 'dearest friend' Cardinal Bessarion (1403–1472) who had both passed away in 1472 within months of each other. With its unusual decoration of portraits of twenty-eight scholars (including Petrarch, and the late Cardinal Bessarion) the dimly-lit, windowless room must have served the duke primarily as a site of spiritual conversation with the authors of his cherished books ('conversatio librorum'). The solitary contemplation of these lively and life-like portraits must have helped Federico to overcome his loneliness and grief.

Arnold A. Witte's essay studies the long shadow cast by the Plinian *diaeta* (as a place for study and repose) on the 'modern' museum, as perhaps most clearly articulated by Catherine the Great's Hermitage buildings in St. Petersburg. Denoting both a room or separate building and a specific way of

life, the various kinds of *diaetae* described by Pliny (61–113) emphasise the individual freedom offered by this space to pursue one's own interests and desires undisturbed by the demands and norms of public life. As Witte shows, in the early modern period the *diaeta* was increasingly merged with the *hermitage*, another type of social seclusion, which gained prominence with the growing interest in the practice of meditation. The development down through the centuries of this kind of separate space, whether in the guise of villa, hermitage, *musaeum*, or coffee house, went hand in hand with the emergence of an etiquette that valued wit over rank and promoted the experience of aesthetic pleasure as the new virtue of the learned.

The multiplicity of concepts and forms of religious solitude as well as their intersections (and frictions) during the *grand siècle* in France are investigated in Mette Birkedal Bruun's contribution on the Cistercian abbey of La Trappe and its famous abbot and reformer, Armand-Jean le Bouthillier de Rancé (1626–1700). The place of solitude created by Rancé after he became regular abbot of the monastery in 1663—following his conversion and novitiate training at Perseigne—united in a unique fashion the ascetic ideal cultivated by the desert fathers and the new needs of the intellectual, economic, and aristocratic elites for temporary penitential regimes. The ingenious layout of the monastery allowed the monks to accommodate hundreds of visitors on the grounds without having them disturb their own practice of silence and solitude. While Rancé deliberately increased La Trappe's geographical isolation by cutting it off from major roads, he used his vast network of correspondents to align the place's monastic solitude with the world of Paris and other towns, thus creating a concept of solitude porous to both the monastic and secular worlds.

The focus of Marie Theres Stauffer's essay is the famous *Spiegelscherbenkabinett* (*Cabinet of Fragmented Mirrors*) in the Old Palace at Bayreuth, begun by 1715 as a courtly hermitage with "cells" for a circle of trusted courtiers. While the hermitage was owned by Margravine Friederike Sophie Wilhelmine (1709–1758), who had received it as a birthday present from her husband, Margrave Friedrich (1711–1763), it underwent several alterations in design in her care. These changes affected, in particular, Wilhelmine's private apartments to which the *Spiegelscherbenkabinett* belonged. In contrast to the contemporary fashion of mirror-lined rooms, Wilhelmine decorated the cabinet with irregularly shaped mirrors of various sizes that covered the walls in random order, interspersed with East Asian-inspired decorative elements. According to Stauffer, the margravine, who also owned an impressive collection of philosophical books (in both the European and Confucian traditions), made use of

the unusual “space of reflection” to reflect on the (fragmentary) nature of her own life.

*Part 5* (“Solitude in Antiquarian and Natural History”), finally, considers the reception of motifs and aspects of solitude by early modern historians, antiquarians, and naturalists. Bernd Roling’s essay sheds new light on the early modern historiography of female druids and other women who lived in the woods and other secluded places and were best known among the Germanic tribes for their prophetic and healing powers. Most prominent among them was the ‘prophetissa’ Veleda already mentioned by Tacitus in his *Histories*. The first Dutch, Danish, German, and Swedish scholars of northern antiquity such as Hadrianus Junius (1511–1575), Thomas Bartholin (1616–1680), Johann Georg Keysler (1693–1743), and Johan Göransson (1712–1769) sparked a new interest in the history of these solitary women and their ambiguous status and roles as witches, diviners, magicians, and healers. The discussion was interwoven with debates about the histories of national literatures and cultures different from those of ancient Rome.

The book ends with Paul J. Smith’s fascinating explorations into the multi-layered interpretations of the most enigmatic bird in Judaeo-Christian writing, the ‘passer solitarius in tecto’ (*Psalm 101:8*) of the Vulgate to which the Psalmist compares himself. As demonstrated by Smith with many examples, the attempts by early modern naturalists to identify and classify this biblical bird were closely entwined with exegetical, emblematic, and poetical traditions, to which Petrarch too contributed. The evocative power of the biblical image stimulated a whole range of referential and self-referential meanings, frequently anthropomorphising the bird to resemble a solitary condition.

On the title page of the 1618 Milan so-called *Feather Book*, a blue rock thrush (one of the bird species generally identified with the ‘passer solitarius’) metamorphoses into a ‘passer salutari[s]’—a ‘bringer of good luck’. The creative misspelling may have resulted from the variety of conflicting meanings and emotions surrounding the term ‘solitudo’, the premodern history and place of which this book has attempted to explore.

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## **PART 1**

### *Solitude in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Foundations, Shifts, and Transformations*

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# Petrarch's Constructions of the Sacred Solitary Place in *De vita solitaria* and Other Writings

*Karl A.E. Enenkel*

## Introduction

The treatise *De vita solitaria* is pivotal for the understanding of Francis Petrarch (1304–1374) as a writer and intellectual.<sup>1</sup> The father of humanism identified himself completely with the topic of the work: the *vita solitaria* is *his* lifestyle; *he* is the *solitarius*. On every page one can read how much Petrarch appropriated the solitary lifestyle as the trademark of his personality. In the opening section of *De vita solitaria* he even claims that the source of his work is exclusively his personal experience, and that he is not going to take into account any literary tradition.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, in his other writings Petrarch construes himself as *solitarius*. Petrarch's emphasis on solitude displays a remarkable ritual: the

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1 On *De vita solitaria* see Enenkel K.A.E., *Francesco Petrarca, De vita solitaria, Buch 1. Kritische Textausgabe und ideengeschichtlicher Kommentar* (Leiden et al.: 1990); for Petrarch as an autobiographical writer cf. idem, *Die Erfindung des Menschen: Die Autobiographik des frühneuzeitlichen Humanismus von Petrarca bis Lipsius* (Berlin – New York, NY: 2008) 40–126 (detailed bibliographical annotations and further reading at 865–871); and for the success of *De vita solitaria*, idem, “Die monastische Petrarca-Rezeption: Zur Autorisierung über den Widmungsempfänger und zu anderen Bedingungen des Erfolgs von *De vita solitaria* in spätmittelalterlichen Klöstern”, *Neulateinisches Jahrbuch* 14 (2012) 27–51. For *De vita solitaria*, cf. also Maggi A., “You Will Be My Solitude”, in Kirkham V. – Maggi A. (eds.), *Petrarch: A Guide to the Complete Works* (Chicago, IL – London: 2009) 179–195; Moos P. von, “Les solitudes de Pétrarque: Liberté intellectuelle et activisme urbain dans la crise du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle”, *Rassegna europea di letteratura italiana* 7 (1996) 23–58; Isette S., “Il linguaggio ascetico di Francesco Petrarca nel *De vita solitaria*”, *Studi umanistici piceni* 23 (2003) 75–94; and the English translation of the work by Jacob Zeitlin: *The Life of Solitude by Francis Petrarch* (Urbana, IL: 1924). For the topics of this contribution cf. also Enenkel K.A.E., “Spiritualität, Religiosität und der Kult der einsiedlerischen Weltverachtung bei Francesco Petrarca”, in Hamm B. – Kaufmann Th. (eds.), *Wie fromm waren die Humanisten?* (Wiesbaden: 2016) 49–63, and idem, “*Sacra solitudo: Petrarch's Authorship and the locus sacer*”, in Candido I. (ed.), *Petrarch and Boccaccio: The Unity of Knowledge in the Pre-modern World* (Berlin – Boston, MA: 2018) 52–64.

2 Cf. Enenkel, *Francesco Petrarca, De vita solitaria 176–181* (“Die persönliche Erfahrung als Grundlage von *De vita solitaria*”).

ritual of a new intellectual who engages in a complex self-assurance and self-sacralisation in which he constitutes himself in a solitary, sacred place.

Let us take a look at the ingredients or elements of Petrarch's self-constitution and analyse the way in which they function. Petrarch's claims for the author's sacrality are manifold and complex. To make matters even more complicated: it is not true that the sacrality of Petrarch's solitary life is simply based on his personal experience. As a close analysis of *De vita solitaria* has shown, the work is deeply rooted in various literary and theological traditions, and it is full of intertextual links and quotations: from classical Latin authors, the Bible, the *Breviarium Romanum*, the Church Fathers, the *Lausiac History*, medieval monasticism, and so on.<sup>3</sup> And almost all of these sources contribute in various ways to the author's sacrality and, more specifically, to the *creation of sacred spaces and places*. Interestingly, Petrarch was well aware of the fact that intellectual activities may take place in all kinds of places and situations—in towns, on feast days, or during the nighttime hours. In fact, one only needs some free time, inner peace, and concentration. From his study of Seneca, he knew very well the techniques of the *retraite spirituelle* ("innerer Rückzug"),<sup>4</sup> which enabled the wise man to concentrate on philosophical thoughts even when surrounded by noisy crowds, such as at marketplaces, fitness studios, and baths. In the second book of *De vita solitaria*, Petrarch admits that there are three types of solitude: solitude defined by *place and space* ('solitudo loci'); solitude defined by certain *times* ('solitudo temporis'), such as 'at night when even the market places are lonely and silent'; and the solitude of mind ('solitudo animi'), which represents the *retraite spirituelle*.<sup>5</sup> In *De vita solitaria* and other writings, however, Petrarch principally insists on the *solitudo loci*. Markets and other public places—in fact, all places in towns—will never be-

3 Ibidem, passim, apparatus of sources.

4 For the *retraite spirituelle* cf. ibidem 420–428 ("Der 'innere Rückzug'"). Hadot I., *Seneca und die griechisch-römische Tradition der Seelenleitung* (Berlin: 1969); eadem, *Sénèque: Direction spirituelle et pratique de la philosophie* (Paris: 2014); Rabbow P., *Seelenführung: Methodik der Exercitien in der Antike* (Munich: 1954), esp. 91–111 (chapter "Die Übung der geistigen Zurückgezogenheit [retraite spirituelle]"). Die Übung der guten Gedanken [*bonnes pensées*]); Albrecht M. von, *Wort und Wandlung: Senecas Lebenskunst* (Leiden – Boston, MA: 2004) 57; Cancik H., *Untersuchungen zu Senecas Epistulae morales* (Hildesheim: 1967) 114–115 (= Spudasmata 18).

5 Petrarcha, *Prose*, ed. G. Martellotti (Milan – Naples: 1955), 454: 'Triplex nempe, si rite complector, solitudo est: loci scilicet, de qua maxime michi nunc sermo susceptus est; temporis, qualis est noctium, quando etiam in rostris solitudo silentiumque est; animi, qualis est eorum, qui vi profundissime contemplationis abstracti luce media et frequenti foro, quid illic geratur, nesciunt; qui, quotiens et ubicunque voluerint, soli sunt'.

come sacred: they are deeply profane. When he considers the *retraite spirituelle* at all, Petrarch's argument always takes the same turn: he says that only highly spiritual persons are able to engage in it, and that he himself does not belong to this small group of privileged people; therefore, the *solitudo loci* is for him the better and safer lifestyle.

### The Sacred Space: Outside Towns

The *locus sacer* of Petrarch's lifestyle and authorship is always located outside of cities or towns, crowded and narrow places, places where many people would come together, go to and fro, and talk, shout, or make other noise. Petrarch's *solitudo* is separated from such places; it combines ritual, religious segregation, and an elitist conception of literature, and in this respect it resembles Horace's self-presentation as an author, displayed, for example, in *Carmen III*, 1, which starts with the line: 'Odi profanum volgus et arceo' ('I hate the profane people and I chase them away'). Petrarch claims that his authorship is situated in a place far away from the profane *vulgaris*, or the townspeople. He deliberately writes, as he indicates in the preface of *De vita solitaria*, for a small elite of selected readers, 'paucis lectoribus', yet another quote from Horace.<sup>6</sup> In the second book of *De vita solitaria* he uses Horace, *Letter II*, 6, as a blueprint, and he presents line 77 as a 'universal rule' of authorship: 'Scriptorum chorus omnis amat nemus et fugit urbes' ('All writers love the woods and flee from the towns').<sup>7</sup> Interestingly, Petrarch takes the line as a 'universalis regula', although it is hard to imagine that he did not understand the ironic and satirical leanings of Horace's letter, which is a playful farewell poem from lyrical poetry. Already in his *Epistole metrice* Petrarch had composed a variation of Horace's line: 'Silva placet Musis, urbs est inimica poetis' ('The Muses love woods, the poets hate towns').<sup>8</sup>

With this remarkable rule, based on the *auctoritas* of Horace, Petrarch deauthorises urban writers. Woods are sacred places; they provide contact with the divine and give godly inspiration to the writer. Towns, on the other hand, are profane, and in this sense they do not support authorship. In the fourteenth century, such a position seems quite remarkable, especially if one takes into

<sup>6</sup> *Satires I*, 10, 74.

<sup>7</sup> Petrarcha, *Prose* (ed. Martellotti) 530.

<sup>8</sup> *Epistole metrice II*, 3, ed. Herold, 1344. Cf. Enenkel, *Die Erfindung des Menschen* 57–58. In *De vita solitaria*, as yet another form of self-assurance, Petrarch includes this verse too, cf. Petrarcha, *Prose* (ed. Martellotti) 530.

account the urbanisation of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and the important changes in intellectual life that took place in this period: for example, the rise of the universities and the canon schools, both situated in towns; the rise of the urban mendicant orders, which participated substantially in education and intellectual life; and, of course, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the rise of vernacular literature.

Petrarch's location of the writer as being outside of towns is a highly ideological statement. He seems to deeply disagree with the whole development of intellectual life from the twelfth century up to the middle of the fourteenth century. It includes a firm stand, *inter alia*, against scholastic philosophy and theology, Aristotelianism, medicine and physics, jurisprudence, university education in general, lawyers and notaries, teachers of grammar schools, secretaries and other administrators of towns, the mendicant orders, teachers and preachers alike, and vernacular literature. Furthermore, it also included an ideological statement against Avignon as the place of the papal curia. This means that Petrarch, as an author, locates himself deliberately outside of those intellectual mainstream developments. This is remarkable indeed. Furthermore, in Petrarch's works Avignon appears as the negative *exemplum par excellence* of a town: narrow, extremely crowded, full of people who came there from abroad, very dirty and noisy, and so on. Furthermore, Avignon appears as the symbol of the ongoing moral decay Petrarch ascribed to his times. And, as one can read *ad nauseam* in the *Epistole sine nomine*, Petrarch associated the town Avignon with an elaborate eschatological ideology.<sup>9</sup> This town is the place where the Antichrist will appear and the eschatological feats will happen.<sup>10</sup> Spatial constraints do not allow me to go deeper into this matter, but it is necessary to mention it as a framework for Petrarch's anti-urban position. It indicates that for him the town was the opposite of the sacred place: a place polluted by sinful behaviour and moral decay, a swamp of sins, hell on earth.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Piur P., *Petrarcas "Buch ohne Namen" und die päpstliche Kurie* (Halle: 1925), passim.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *ibidem* 6–48; for the concept of the "Antichrist" cf. Jenks G.C., *The Origins and Early Development of the Antichrist Myth* (Berlin et al.: 1991); *idem*, art. "Antichrist", in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* 3 (Berlin et al.: 1978) 20–50; Rauh H.D., *Das Bild des Antichrist im Mittelalter: Von Tyconius zum deutschen Symbolismus* (Münster: 1973); Aichele K., *Das Antichristdrama des Mittelalters, der Reformation und Gegenreformation* (The Hague: 1974); and Baethgen F., *Der Engelpapst: Idee und Erscheinung* (Leipzig: 1943).

### The *locus sacer* as a Private Place

Furthermore, Petrarch constructed his sacred space as a kind of *private place* which is 'free'—'liber'—in more than one sense.<sup>11</sup> This construction unites juridical, social, ideological, moral, and intellectual aspects. It was not enough that the *locus sacer* was outside the town: it had to be a *locus liber* in every sense.

Petrarch served powerful people, such as Cardinal Giovanni Colonna (ca. 1295–1348), as chaplain, private secretary, ambassador, advisor, etc. If he stayed at the court of one of his lords, Petrarch was not inclined to consider himself 'free'. For him, courts could never function as sacred places of authorship because they were morally polluted places, Petrarch argued, in a lengthy chapter of the first book of *De vita solitaria*.<sup>12</sup> Courtiers he regarded as mental slaves who, since they lacked free will, were unable to take moral decisions and develop spirituality. And that is why they simply take over the sins and unholy behaviour of their environment and their masters. This is a remarkable statement from a man who, after all, was a courtier. Sometimes Petrarch's identification of private life with morality and spirituality leads to even more remarkable statements: For example, in his autobiography, *Epistola posteritati*, he claims that he did not live in the palaces of his powerful Maecenases, but that it seemed to him as if they lived with *him*, i.e. in *his* place.<sup>13</sup>

Interestingly, Petrarch applies this manner of thinking also to his house in Vaucluse, which was in fact a present from his lord, Cardinal Giovanni Colonna. Of course also after the donation, Petrarch remained a courtier in the service of the cardinal. Nevertheless, juridically, the house with garden was his private property, and Petrarch used this fact for a remarkable social self-construction. For example in the preface to *De vita solitaria* he emphasises that the territorial lord of Vaucluse, Philippe de Cabassoles (1305–1372), bishop of Cavaillon, payed him a visit in Vaucluse, and that he came there only for him: Petrarch proudly states that the bishop stayed there for two

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Enenkel, *Francesco Petrarca, De vita solitaria* 249, 297, 354–355, 364, 373, 457, 481, 483, 494–495; for this aspect, see also Von Moos, "Les solitudes de Pétrarque" 23–58.

<sup>12</sup> *De vita solitaria* (ed. Enenkel) 1, 3.

<sup>13</sup> *Epistola posteritati* (ed. Enenkel) 8: 'Principum ac regum familiaritatibus et nobilium amicitiis usque ad invidiam fortunatus fui. Maximi regum mee etatis et amarunt et coluerunt me. [...] Et ita cum quibusdam fui, ut ipsi quodammodo mecum essent [...]'] (in Enenkel K.A.E. – Jong-Crane B. de – Liebregts P. (eds.), *Modelling the Individual: Biography and Portrait in the Renaissance. With a Critical Edition of Petrarch's Letter to Posterity* [Amsterdam – Atlanta, GA: 1998] 260–261).

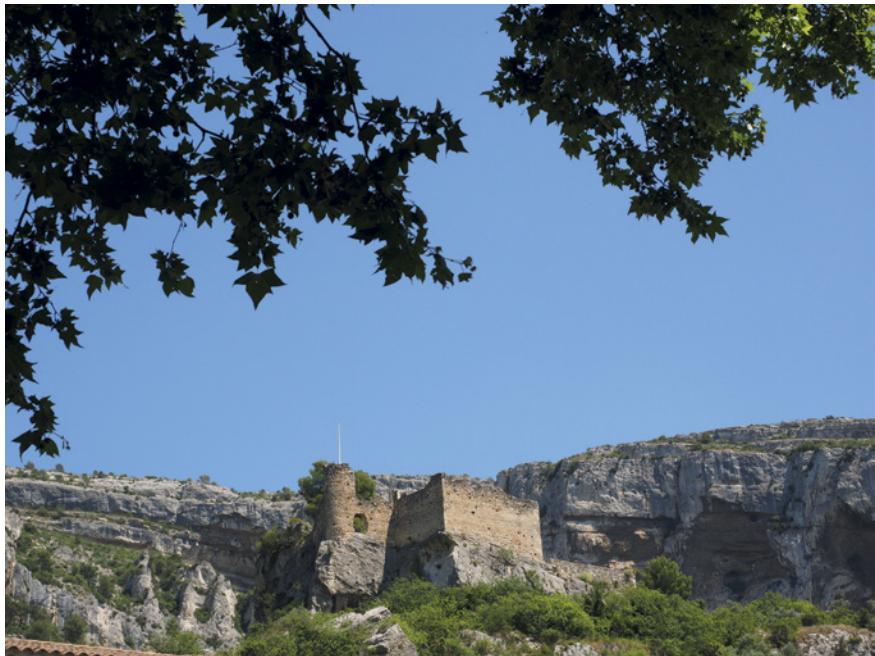


FIGURE 2.1 *Castle of the Bishop of Cavaillon, Vaucluse.*

IMAGE © PUBLIC DOMAIN (PIXABAY).

full weeks with him, and truly *with him* (cf. the iterated ‘mecum’: ‘*mecum inquam*’).<sup>14</sup> Guided by this presentation the reader automatically assumes that Philippe de Cabassoles lived indeed for some time together with Petrarch in his private house at the fountain. What Petrarch withholds (and the average reader does not know) is the fact that the lord bishop owned a castle in Vaucluse, just on the hilltop above the fountain [Fig. 2.1]. In other words: the bishop will have stayed during this period not in Petrarch’s house of course, but in his own castle. In the preface of *De vita solitaria*, however, Petrarch very much suggests that Vaucluse was *his own private property*.

Through his works, prose and poetry alike, Petrarch completely took possession of Vaucluse, and he emphasised this in various ways. Most importantly, he presented himself in his many autobiographical writings as *the inhabitant*

<sup>14</sup> *De vita solitaria* (ed. Enenkel), Proh. 8. Cf. Enenkel K.A.E., *Die Stiftung von Autorschaft in der neulateinischen Literatur (ca. 1350–ca. 1650)* (Leiden – Boston, MA: 2015) 169–172 (chapter 1, 4 “Amicitia. Die Inszenierung einer freundschaftlichen Beziehung zwischen Autor und ranghöherem Widmungsempfänger”).



FIGURE 2.2 Petrarch, "My most pleasant transalpine solitude", i.e. in Vaucluse.  
 Pen drawing by Petrarch himself in his manuscript of Pliny the Elder,  
*Naturalis historia* (to book XVIII, paragraph 190) fol. 143r. Paris,  
*Bibliothèque Nationale de France* (Ms. Lat. 6802).  
 IMAGE © BNF, PARIS [HTTP://GALLICA.BNF.FR/ARK:/12148/BTV1B90679875/F154.ITEM](http://GALLICA.BNF.FR/ARK:/12148/BTV1B90679875/F154.ITEM).

('inhabitor') of the solitary valley, the 'Vallis clausa', although he actually stayed there only at times and mostly during holiday periods, and although the valley was actually permanently inhabited by a number of other people. Among others, there was a village, a church, and the castle of the bishop of Cavaillon. Petrarch, however, suggested that he was living there as 'solitarius', which means hermit. Moreover, he suggested that "his place" was not only his house and garden, but also the surrounding landscape—the woods on the rocky hills that encircled the valley. In his manuscript of Pliny, which is preserved (Paris, BN, Ms. Lat. 6802), Petrarch made a drawing of the landscape of Vaucluse (fol. 143r) to which he gave the title 'my most pleasant transalpine solitude' ('transalpina solitudo mea iocundissima') [Fig. 2.2].<sup>15</sup> From this "caption"

<sup>15</sup> The drawing is a kind of personal reaction to Pliny, *Natural History* XVIII, 190, where the Roman scholar talks about 'a famous fountain in the Roman provincia Narbonensis [i.e. the Provence] called Orga': 'Est in Narbonensi provincia nobilis fons Orgae nomine'.

under Petrarch's design it appears that he regarded also the landscape in the surrounding of his house, in this case the rock with church (maybe St. Veran or Notre-Dame-de-Fontaine-de-Vaucluse) as 'his hermitage'. Interestingly, he annexed also a church to his private solitude, and through this construction he enhanced its sacrality. Additionally, the rock upon which the church is built may have a symbolic meaning—as the mountain of virtue. In this case Petrarch included also the mountain of virtue in his private property.

Petrarch's privatisation of the sacred place extended also to the woods. Emphatically, he called himself henceforth 'Silvius' or 'Silvanus', i.e. 'the man who dwells in the woods', 'the wood dweller'. Petrarch's contemporaries registered this self-presentation as something remarkable if not odd, and some of them, among them a papal physician, made fun of him, calling him an owl hiding in the dark woods.<sup>16</sup>

From Petrarch's "privatisation" of the sacred place it also becomes clear that it cannot be identified with a coenobitic monastery, which would of course imply the rigorous obedience to an abbot, and a stringent schedule of daily obligations that includes prayer, manual labour, meals, and sleep. Petrarch's exemplary intellectual, the *solitarius*, prays the hours, but not in a chorus with others—he spends his time extremely individualistically, just in the way it comes to his mind, and he does not engage in any manual labour, such as the Benedictine rule, for example, would have prescribed.

Petrarch's privatisation of the solitary place was influenced by a historical tradition, the villa culture of the ancient Romans of the late republic (second and first century BC). Well-to-do and distinguished Romans used to stay in vacation periods outside Rome, in the countryside on the surrounding hills and at the seashore where they owned villas in beautiful spots such as Tusculum, Formiae, Cumae, Baiae, and so on. It was Cicero who firmly connected this tradition of spending one's free time with philosophy and writing, through the elaborate dialogue settings of his philosophical works. Petrarch read Cicero's dialogues with great interest, and he became inspired by the idea of the villa dialogue (see below).<sup>17</sup> An important ingredient was the fact that

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Petrarch strongly believed that with this remark Pliny the Elder referred to the Sorgue, the fountain of Vaucluse. Therefore, he changed the text of Pliny into 'fons <S>org[a]'. Cf. De Nolhac P., *Pétrarque et l'umanisme*, 2 vols. (Paris: 1907), vol. 2, 270–271. Petrarch's emendation was not successful; the modern *textus receptus* of Pliny still has 'fons Orgae'.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Enenkel K.A.E., "Ein erster Ansatz zur Konstituierung einer humanistischen Streitkultur: Petrarcas *Invective contra medicum*", in Laureys M. – Simons R. (eds.), *Die Kunst des Streitens: Inszenierung, Formen und Funktion öffentlichen Streits in historischer Perspektive* (Bonn: 2010) 109–126, esp. 114–115.

<sup>17</sup> See the section "Vaucluse as a Place of Philosophical Conversation with the Spirits of the Ancients".

the philosophical discussions took place on the private estate (villa, garden, etc.) of one of the interlocutors. Petrarch placed his property in Vaucluse in this literary and cultural tradition. For example, he identified it with Cicero's country estate in Arpinum (nowadays Arpino, in the province of Lazio), the (dramatic) place of his *Tusculanae disputationes*. In this work Petrarch found the information that Cicero's estate 'was surrounded by two ice-cold rivers' (or two branches of one river; 'gelidis fluminibus circumseptum'). In one of his letters Petrarch proudly emphasises that exactly the same goes for his property in Vaucluse.<sup>18</sup> An important consequence was that Petrarch's private *liberty* became—via Cicero's dialogues—tightly connected with writing and authorship. Actually, it functioned as a precondition of authorship.

### Fontaine de Vaucluse as a Sacred Place: Exile and 'Helicon transalpinus'

For Petrarch, the sacrality of the lonely valley was closely connected with the spectacular fountain, which appeared as a kind of miracle of nature: situated under a steep wall of rock (some 230 metres high), it is seemingly dry part of the year; but in spring an astonishing quantity of water, stemming from the surrounding mountains, gushes forth from a system of caves deep down under the rock [Fig. 2.3]. More than once Petrarch emphasises that the fountain evokes in its visitors admiration, reverence, and a kind of religious awe.<sup>19</sup>

The sacrality of this place seemed to be safeguarded by the fact that it was completely separated from the *mundus*. The valley's natural architecture—the fact that it ended at a high wall of rock—and its name were ideal: 'Vallis clausa', 'Closed Valley'. Except for the wall, the valley was surrounded by rocky hills with pine trees [Fig. 2.4], which also contributed to its closed, safe, and sacred character. The 'Closed Valley' is a place of refuge—refuge from spiritual dangers and from the world, with its bad influences and dangers. Petrarch tries to persuade Philippe de Cabassoles, bishop of Cavaillon, to live in Vaucluse because of its 'safe' landscape formation, with the hills surrounding the valley.<sup>20</sup>

18 Petrarch, *Familiares* XII, 8, 1.

19 *De vita solitaria* II, in *Prose* (ed. Martellotti) 566: '(locus) qui advenis et reverentiam inicit et stuporem. [...] ubi, queso, religiosior usquam specus? Et, si quod sequitur, est verum: "Magnorum" quidem enim inquit [sc. Seneca], "fluminum capita veneramur", ubi maior venerior? Flumina maiora [...] novimus, fontem nullum'.

20 Ibidem 564: 'Adest tibi [sc. Philippe] tuus Sorgia, rex fontium, ad cuius tibi murmur hec scribo; adest liberrimum gratissimumque perfugium Clause Vallis; sic enim vocant incole, sic vocari voluit natura, quando illa circumductis collibus abdidit extra omne iter



FIGURE 2.3 *Photograph of the Fontaine de Vaucluse, Well of the Muses.*

IMAGE © PUBLIC DOMAIN (PIXABAY).



FIGURE 2.4 *Photograph of rocky hills with pine trees around the Fontaine de Vaucluse.*

IMAGE © PUBLIC DOMAIN (PIXABAY).

In *Epistola metrica* 1, 6, Petrarch regarded Vaucluse as the place of his *exile* from the 'civil wars of Italy'. This is somewhat exaggerated: Petrarch's safety was certainly not dependent on his stay in Vaucluse. He was probably safer in Avignon, where he normally lived, and technically speaking he was not even in exile: his father had left Florence before Petrarch was even born. 'Exile' seems to be more of an intellectual, ideological, and spiritual self-construction.

In this respect, it is interesting that Petrarch says his place in Vaucluse hosts other famous exiles: the nine 'sisters', the Muses. Petrarch claims that the Muses had been exiled from Greece and now lived with him at the Fontaine de Vaucluse.<sup>21</sup> This is a kind of *translatio imperii* in a poetic and spiritual sense. In this *translatio imperii*, Petrarch identified the rocky wall next to his house with the "mountain of the Muses" in central Greece situated at the gulf of Corinth—the Helicon<sup>22</sup>—and he identified the fountain of the Sorgue with the Greek fountain sanctuaries of the Muses in the valleys at the foot of Helicon—Aganippe (connected with the river Permessos) and Hippocrene, the so-called horse-fountain originating from Pegasus, Bellerophon's horse. In the description of Vaucluse in verse epistle 1, 6, Petrarch states: 'Hic mihi mons Helicon, hic mihi fons Aganippe' ('Here is my mountain Helicon, here my fountain Aganippe'). Here again, Petrarch's sacralisation of the place goes together with a kind of privatisation: he annexes the whole area outside of his house, the fountain of the Sorgue, and the high rock as his private property. In several of his works, he calls it his 'Helicon transalpinus', 'Helicon across the Alps'.<sup>23</sup> Together with his friend, the poet Guglielmo da Pastrengo of Verona (ca. 1290–1362),<sup>24</sup> he erected a wall of stones in order to prevent shepherds with their flocks of goats from polluting the sacred spring; and the same Guglielmo

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omnemque concussum, viderique nisi ab incolis non permisit'—'Because here you have your Sorgue, the king of fountains, at which babbling water I write these lines to you. Here you have the most welcome and free place of refuge—the Closed Valley; because this is the name the inhabitants gave to it, this is the name nature itself wanted to give to it because it encircled it with hills in order to hide it away from all travellers and visitors, and did not allow that people look at it, except of course its inhabitants'.

<sup>21</sup> For example, in *Epistola metrica* III, 1 he calls the Muses his 'fellow-citizens' ('concives') of Vaucluse.

<sup>22</sup> For the Helicon, cf. *Realencyclopädie des Classischen Alterthums* VIII, 1 (1912), cols. 1–7. The Helicon had been established as the sacred mountain of the Muses by Hesiod, *Theogonia*, verses 1–8. See also Collins D., "Hesiod and the Divine Voice of the Muses", *Arethusa* 32 (1999) 241–261.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. e.g. *Familiares* XII, 8.

<sup>24</sup> For Guglielmo cf. [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/guglielmo-da-pastrengo\\_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/guglielmo-da-pastrengo_(Dizionario-Biografico)/). Petrarcha's friendship with him started in 1336, when Guglielmo came to Avignon.

helped him plant there laurel trees, close to the fountain.<sup>25</sup> This was another means to mark the fountain as a 'locus sacer': the laurel was, of course, the holy tree of the Musagetes Apollo, the god of poetry, wisdom, and authorship, the father of invention. But at the same time, the laurel was the trademark of Petrarch the poet, the *poet laureate* and author of the love songs to Madonna Laura—he identified the laurel with the poet's laurel crown and eternal fame.

As an author of poetry and prose alike, Petrarch always used the laurel as an important means of authorisation. In the title inscriptions of his works he calls himself 'Franciscus Petrarca poeta laureatus'. The fact that he planted the laurel trees at the fountain means that he marked Fontaine de Vaucluse not only as a sacred place, but also as his private place, his 'Helicon transalpinus'. This authorisation of his authorship by the Muses he did not take over from Hesiod (he did not master Greek) but from Roman poets, such as Propertius, Horace, and Virgil.<sup>26</sup> But, unlike the Roman poets, Petrarch claimed an ongoing, personal relationship with Apollo and the Muses, as a kind of private privilege.<sup>27</sup>

Petrarch's self-construction as the poet laureate sitting at his transalpine Helicon is reflected in many author's portraits, especially that of the *Canzoniere*. For example, in a manuscript of the Bibliotheca Bodmeriana from ca. 1500–1510 [Fig. 2.5],<sup>28</sup> written by the outstanding scribe Bartolomeo Sanvito

<sup>25</sup> *Epistole metrice* III, 3; *Poesie minori del Petrarca sul testo latina ora corretto* [...], ed. D. Rossetti (Milan: 1829–1834), vol. 2, 190–192; cf. Enenkel, *Die Erfindung des Menschen* 46–65. Petrarch's description refers to a visit by Guglielmo da Verona in the year 1338 or 1339.

<sup>26</sup> For the Muses as sources of inspiration and authorship cf. Spentzou E. – Fowler D. (eds.), *Cultivating the Muse: Struggles for Power and Inspiration in Classical Literature* (Oxford: 2002); Barmeyer E., *Die Musen: Ein Beitrag zur Inspirationstheorie* (Munich: 1968); Otto W.F., *Die Musen und der göttliche Ursprung des Singens und Sagens* (Düsseldorf: 1955); Suerbaum W., art. "Muse", *Enciclopedia Virgiliana* 3 (1987) 625–641; Nancy J.-L., *The Muses*, trans. P. Kamuf (Stanford, CA: 1996); Kambylis A., *Die Dichterweihe und thre Symbolik. Untersuchungen zu Hesiodos, Kallimachos, Properz und Ennius* (Heidelberg: 1965); Lieberg G., "Die Muse des Properz und seine Dichterweihe", *Philologus* 107 (1963) 116–129, 263–270; Thornton A., "Horace's Ode to Calliope (III.4)", *Journal of the Australasian Universities Language and Literature Association* 23 (1965) 96–102; Miller J.F., "Ennius and the Elegists", in *Illinois Classical Studies* 8 (1983) 277–295. For the reception of these concepts in the Renaissance cf. Steppich Ch.J., *Numine afflatur: Die Inspiration des Dichters im Denken der Renaissance* (Wiesbaden: 2002).

<sup>27</sup> For a more detailed discussion cf. Enenkel, *Die Stiftung von Autorschaft in der neulateinischen Literatur (ca. 1350–ca. 1650)* 387–394 (chapter iv, 1 "Autorschaftsstiftung durch antike Gottheiten: Gebet zu den Musen, Bitte um Inspiration, Dichterweihe, Furor poeticus").

<sup>28</sup> Manuscript of the *Canzoniere*, written by Bartolomeo Sanvito, in Padua, ca. 1500–1510, Cologny–Geneva, Bibliotheca Bodmeriana MS. 130, fol. 1ov. Cf. Trapp J.B., "The Iconography

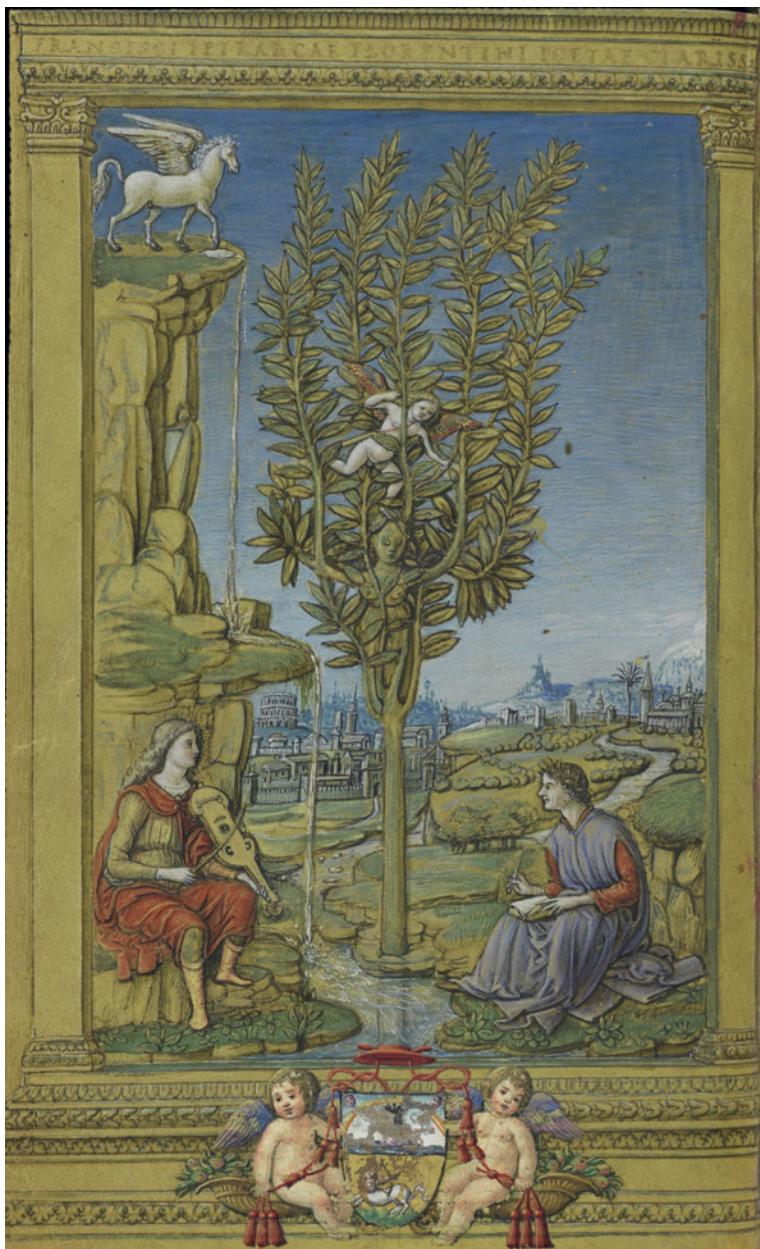


FIGURE 2.5 Anon. artist, "Petrarch and Apollo Sitting at the Well of the Muses".

Illumination, 20 x 12 cm, in the *Canzoniere* manuscript written by Bartolomeo Sanvito, Padua (ca. 1500–1510). Cologny, Bibliotheca Bodmeriana, MS. 130, fol. 10v.

IMAGE © E-CODICES.UNIFR.CH (CC BY-NC 4.0) [HTTP://WWW.E-CODICES.UNIFR.CH/DE/LIST/ONE/FMB/CB-0130](http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/de/list/one/fmb/cb-0130).

(1433–1511),<sup>29</sup> the inspired poet, wearing the laurels, is sitting in front of the rock wall, his Helicon, and his fountain of the Muses (the fountain of the Sorgue); just in front of the rock wall we see the lord of inspiration, the Musagetes Apollo, playing the lyre. The inspired poet Petrarch writes down the songs he hears from Apollo. The horse on the hilltop, Pegasus, marks the fountain as the Muses' spring Hippocrene. In the middle of the painting we see Petrarch's and Apollo's laurel tree; the woman in the tree represents Apollo's nymph Daphne, i.e. the Greek word for laurel, and Petrarch's Muse Laura as well. Amor shoots an arrow in the direction of Petrarch, the famous lover of Laura.

### Vaucluse as a Place of Philosophical Conversation with the Spirits of the Ancients

The solitary place of Vaucluse was for Petrarch a permanent source of poetical inspiration, historical imagination and memory, and philosophical meditation. Petrarch enhanced the spiritual power and efficacy of the *locus* by transferring to it the heroes of the past, the sacred spirits of antiquity, especially of Roman literature, philosophy, and history. For him, the ancient politicians and orators, philosophers and writers were literally and in person present in Vaucluse, in his house, and his garden at the fountain. For example, Petrarch took with him to Vaucluse in the spring of 1352, for a stay of eleven days, manuscripts with Cicero's works,<sup>30</sup> as he writes to his friend Lapo da Castiglionchio the Elder (ca. 1316–1381), the ambassador of Florence at the papal court in

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of Petrarch in the Age of Humanism", in *idem, Studies of Petrarch and His Influence* (London: 2003) 24–25, and 76; Adams F.B., "A Petrarch Manuscript in the Bodmeriana", in *IX. internationaler Bibliophilen-Kongress, 1975 in der Schweiz. Akten und Referate* (Zurich: 1975) 71–85.

29 For Bartolomeo Sanvito see Mare A.C. de la – Nuvoloni L., *Bartolomeo Sanvito: The Life and Work of a Renaissance Scribe* (Paris: 2009).

30 See the letter *Familiares* XII, 8, addressed to Lapo da Castiglionchio the Elder, dated Avignon, 1 April 1352. Petrarch's manuscripts contained Cicero's philosophical and rhetorical works; a separate codex transcribed by Petrarch himself in 1345 contained Cicero's letters to his friend Atticus, to his brother Quintus, and to Brutus. Furthermore, Petrarch had borrowed a codex with four speeches from Lapo da Castiglionchio: *Pro Plancio*, *Pro Sulla*, *De imperio Gnaei Pompei*, and *Pro Milone*. As appears from *Familiares* XII, 8, 9, he possessed also the speech *Pro rege Deiotaro*. For Cicero's works possessed by Petrarch cf. De Nolhac, *Pétrarque et l'umanisme*, vol. 1, 215–237.

Avignon<sup>31</sup> from whom he had borrowed a manuscript with a couple of Cicero's speeches.<sup>32</sup> Thus, Petrarch showed his guest Cicero—present in the form of manuscripts—in his garden the admirable 'spectaculum fontis', and he was sure that his guest was delighted.

Petrarch's garden at the fountain was the place where the miracle of conversation between spirits of different ages could take place: Petrarch talked there directly to the Romans of antiquity, and discussed with them philosophical, historical, rhetorical, and other topics. When Cicero in the form of his works was "sitting" with him at the fountain, Petrarch imagined that the persons who figured in Cicero's works were present as well: first Cicero's closest friend Titus Pomponius Atticus (110–31 BC), the addressee of many private letters written by Cicero, dedicatee of a collection of letters,<sup>33</sup> and of Cicero's philosophical treatises *Cato maior sive de senectute* (written in 45/44 BC) and *Laelius sive de amicitia* (written in 44 BC), then 'Herennius' (1st century BC) the dedicatee of an important Latin rhetorical treatise, which in the fourteenth century was ascribed to Cicero, and the murderer of Caesar Marcus Junius Brutus (85–42 BC), the dedicatee of Cicero's History of Roman Rhetoric, *Brutus sive de claris oratoribus* and the rhetorical treatise *Orator* (both written in 46 BC), and furthermore of the philosophical dialogues *De natura deorum*, *De finibus bonorum et malorum*,<sup>34</sup> *Tusculanae disputationes* (all written in 45 BC), and *Paradoxa Stoicorum* (46 BC);<sup>35</sup> the great scholar and most prolific Roman author Marcus Terentius Varro (117–27 BC), who figures as a dialogue person in Cicero's philosophical treatise *Academica*;<sup>36</sup> Gaius Aurelius Cotta (consul of 75 BC), Gaius

31 Cf. Davidsohn R., "Tre Orazioni di Lapo da Castiglionchio ambasciatore fiorentino a papa Urbano V e alla Curia in Avignone", *Archivio Storico Italiano* 20 (1897) 225–246.

32 Cf. De Nolhac, *Pétrarque et l'umanisme*, vol. 1, 224. Also this manuscript was present in Vaucluse during the stay in the spring of 1352.

33 Furthermore, Atticus figures as a dialogue person in Cicero's philosophical treatises, e.g. in the *Academica* (2nd ed., cf. below), and in *De legibus* (cf. below).

34 Cf. MacKendrick P., *The Philosophical Books of Cicero* (London: 1989) 131.

35 Furthermore, Cicero refers to Brutus several times in his works, e.g. in his rhetorical treatise *Orator* (preserved) or in his philosophical work *De virtute* (not preserved), and in many of his private letters directed to Atticus and others. Also he corresponded with Brutus, cf. Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Briefwechsel mit M. Brutus. Lateinisch/deutsch*, ed. and trans. M. Giebel (Stuttgart: 1982), and idem, *Epistulae ad Quintum fratrem et M. Brutum*, ed. D.R. Shackleton Bailey (Cambridge: 1980). The corpus edited by Shackleton Bailey consists of some twenty-six letters of Cicero addressed to Brutus. Petrarch had access to Brutus's letters to Cicero from 1345 on.

36 In the second edition of the *Academica* the dialogues take place at Varro's villa at the Lucrine lake, in the surrounding of Cumae, in the year 45 BC. The dialogue persons are

Velleius, and Quintus Lucius Balbus, who all figure as interlocutors of Cicero's philosophical dialogue *De natura deorum* (On the Nature of the Gods);<sup>37</sup> the peripatetic philosopher Cratippus of Pergamum (first century BC), teacher in philosophy to Cicero and his son Marcus;<sup>38</sup> the scholar and philosopher Publius Nigidius Figulus (ca. 100–45 BC), a prolific author of learned works who figures as the main interlocutor in Cicero's dialogue *Timaeus*;<sup>39</sup> Cicero's brother Quintus Tullius Cicero, who appears as a dialogue person in the treatises *De divinatione* (On Prophecy)<sup>40</sup> and *De legibus* (The Laws),<sup>41</sup> and to whom Cicero dedicated his rhetorical masterpiece *De oratore*; 'Sulpitius', i.e. the popular politician and orator Publius Sulpicius Rufus (121–88 BC), a supporter of Marius, killed by Sulla, 'Antonius', i.e. the famous orator Marcus Antonius (ca. 140–87 BC, consul in 89 BC, murdered by Sulla), and 'Crassus', i.e. the statesman and orator Lucius Licinius Crassus (140–91 BC, consul in 95 BC), who all appear as interlocutors

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Varro himself, Marcus Cicero, and Titus Pomponius Atticus. For the *Academica* and its setting cf. MacKendrick *The Philosophical Books of Cicero* 114–130. For Cicero's relationship with Varro cf. Rösch-Binde Ch., *Vom „δεινὸς ἀνήρ“ zum „diligentissimus investigator antiquitatis“: Zur komplexen Beziehung zwischen M. Tullius Cicero und M. Terentius Varro* (Munich: 1998).

37 As Cicero wanted to have it, the dialogues took place in Cotta's house or villa, in 77–75 BC. Cicero says that he was present in Cotta's house, and that he listened to the debates. Gaius Velleius defended the position of the Epicureans, Balbus (who was befriended with Posidonius and Antiochus of Ascalon) of the Stoics, and Cotta, the one of the sceptical Academics. Gaius Aurelius Cotta also figures as an interlocutor in Cicero's rhetorical manual *De oratore*, but in *Familiares* XII, 8, Petrarch obviously had solely the *Academica* in mind.

38 Cicero mentions Cratippus of Pergamum several times in his philosophical treatise *De divinatione*, On prophecy 1, 3; 32; 50; 70–71; 11, 48 and 52. He was befriended by Cratippus in 51 BC, and he made him a Roman citizen and gave him his name: henceforth the philosopher was called Marcus Tullius Cratippus. For Cratippus cf. Dorandi T., "Cratippos de Pergame (M. Tullius)", in Goulet R. (ed.), *Dictionnaire des philosophes antiques*, vol. 2 (Paris: 1994) 501–503.

39 Nigidius was one of Cicero's closest friends, and he supported him in his struggle against Catiline. He authored a respectable number of works, the majority of which is lost. Of Cicero's *Timaeus* only fragments survive.

40 The dramatic date of the dialogues of *De divinatione* is shortly before, and after the Ides of March, and they took place in Marcus Cicero's villa in Tusculum.

41 The dialogues of *De legibus* took place—according to the dialogue setting—at Cicero's villa in Arpinum, below the river Liris, in the late 50s BC. The dialogue characters are Cicero himself, his brother Quintus, and Titus Pomponius Atticus. Cf. MacKendrick, *The Philosophical Books of Cicero* 66.

in the rhetorical treatise *De oratore*,<sup>42</sup> the philosophically minded politician and schoolfriend of Cicero, Lucius Manlius Torquatus (108–47 BC, consul 65 BC),<sup>43</sup> the statesman and Stoic Cato the Younger (97–46 BC), who committed a "Stoic" suicide when he was enclosed by Caesar's army in Africa, and the politician and Aristotelian philosopher Marcus Pupius Piso Calpurnianus (born ca. 114 BC), who all figure as interlocutors of the philosophical treatise *De finibus bonorum et malorum*,<sup>44</sup> furthermore, the leading orator of Rome Quintus Hortalus Hortensius (114–50 BC), Cicero's rival and colleague,<sup>45</sup> to whom he dedicated a dialogue with the name *Hortensius*, containing a fundamental debate between rhetoric and philosophy<sup>46</sup>—the work became a schoolbook that was used even in the times of St. Augustine;<sup>47</sup> Hortalus Hortensius not only published speeches, but also erotic poetry, a rhetorical treatise, and a historical work (*Annales*);<sup>48</sup> the Greek philosopher Epicurus (341–270 BC), whose ideas were frequently discussed and criticised in Cicero's dialogues; the states-

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42 According to Cicero the dialogues took place in Marcus Antonius's villa in Tusculum, in 91 BC, the year of Crassus's death. Cf. MacKendrick, *The Philosophical Books of Cicero* 36. Petrarch does not mention the other interlocutors of *De oratore*, Gaius Aurelius Cotta, Quintus Mucius Scaevola, Quintus Lutatius Catulus, and Gaius Iulius Strabo Vopiscus. *De oratore* was finished in 55 BC.

43 For Torquatus cf. Benferhat Y., "Manlius Torquatus (L.)", in Goulet R. (ed.), *Dictionnaire des philosophes antiques*, vol. 4 (Paris: 2005) 255–256.

44 According to Cicero the dialogues of *De finibus* took place in his villa in Cumae, in Lucius Licinius Lucullus's villa in Tusculum, and in Athens, in the gardens of Plato's Academy.

45 For Hortensius cf. Dyck A.R., "Rivals into Partners: Hortensius and Cicero", *Historia* 52 (2008) 142–173, and Madec G., "Hortensius", in Goulet R. (ed.), *Dictionnaire des philosophes antiques*, Supplément (Paris: 2003) 716–719. Of Hortensius's speeches only fragments survive, see Malcovati H. (ed.), *Oratorum Romanorum Fragmenta* (4th ed. Turino: 1976).

46 The debates took place, as Cicero wanted to have it, in the villa of Lucius Licinius Lucullus, Hortensius's brother in law, in 61 or 60 BC. Cf. MacKendrick, *The Philosophical Books of Cicero* 109.

47 From the sixth century AD, the *Hortensius* survives only in fragments, transmitted by Augustine, Lactantius, Servius, Martianus Capella, and Nonius Marcellus. Cf. MacKendrick, *The Philosophical Books of Cicero* 113; for an edition of the *Hortensius* cf. Straume-Zimmermann L. – Broemser F. – Gigon O. (eds.), *Marcus Tullius Cicero: Hortensius, Lucullus, Academicī libri* (2nd ed. Düsseldorf – Zurich: 1997). Petrarch was acquainted with the fragments of the *Hortensius* especially through his reading of Augustine (*Confessiones*). For Augustine and Cicero's *Hortensius* cf. Taylor J., "St. Augustine and the 'Hortensius' of Cicero", *Studies in Philology* 60 (1963) 487–498, and Feldmann E., *Der Einfluss des Hortensius und des Manichäismus auf das Denken des jungen Augustinus von 373* (Münster: 1975).

48 Cf. Velleius Paterculus II, 16, 3.

man, military leader, and prolific author Cato the Elder (Marcus Porcius Cato Censorius, 234–149 BC), the main interlocutor of Cicero's philosophical treatise *Cato maior sive de senectute* (On Old Age) (written 45/44 BC),<sup>49</sup> the politician and philosopher Gaius Laelius (born ca. 188 BC, consul 140 BC), who belonged to the intellectual circle of Scipio the Younger (185–121 BC) and who figures as the main interlocutor in Cicero's treatise *Laelius sive de amicitia* (written in 44 BC); Scipio the Younger himself, who is the main dialogue person in Cicero's *De republica*,<sup>50</sup> the King of Galatia Deiotarus (102–ca. 40 BC), the triumvir Pompey the Great (106–48 BC), and the leader of the armed forces of the optimates, Titus Annius Milo (died in 48 BC), all of whom were defended by Cicero.<sup>51</sup>

Already Cicero's works provided a respectable number of persons from antiquity: in the dialogues, some fifty persons figure as interlocutors and nine as dedicatees (Brutus, Quintus Cicero, Atticus, Hortensius, Varro, Lucius Licinius Lucullus, Hirtius, Gaius Trebatius Testa, Marcus Cicero filius); in the *Letters to Atticus*, many more persons appear, and, because Petrarch used other ancient writings in a similar way (such as the history of Livy or Valerius Maximus's *Factorum et dictorum memorabilium libri*) the humanist's solitude became a kind of crowded place, at least spiritually, inhabited by several hundreds of distinguished ancient Romans, from Romulus (ca. 750 BC) to the early Roman emperors.

Petrarch's use of Lapo da Castiglionchio's manuscript of Cicero is very illuminating, because it closely connects his solitary place, Vaucluse, with the Roman intellectual circles of the first and second centuries BC, the *villa* and leisure culture of the late Roman Republic, the genre of the dialogue, and Greek philosophy. As the letter to Lapo da Castiglionchio shows, Petrarch was deeply aware of these aspects, and he paid much attention also to Cicero's prefaces, in which the Roman author carefully described the dialogue settings and the interlocutors (he always used historical persons). When Petrarch hosted the interlocutors of Cicero's dialogues in his house in Vaucluse, he identified his solitary place with the villas of the ancient Romans in Tusculum, Cumae, etc. These villas were all located in places that were experienced by

49 According to Cicero the dialogues of *De senectute* took place in Cato the Elder's house, in 150 BC. The other interlocutors, in this context not mentioned by Petrarch, are Scipio Aemilianus (the consul of 147 and 134 BC) and Gaius Laelius (consul of 140 BC). Cf. MacKendrick, *The Philosophical Books of Cicero* 205.

50 The site of the dialogues is the garden of the town-house of Scipio Aemilianus in Rome, at the Campus Martius, the dramatic date 129 BC. In the preserved fragments nine speakers appear; but Petrarch mentions only Scipio.

51 Cf. the speeches *Pro rege Deiotaro*, *De imperio Gnaei Pompei*, and *Pro Milone*.

the upper-class Romans as civilised, relaxing, beautiful, and good for health, but not as "locus asper", desert and solitude. Tusculum and Cumae were actually not large areas in wild nature, but small towns chosen by the well-to-do as places to be in vacation or summer periods. Most importantly, places such as Tusculum and Cumae facilitated the cultivated social life, and functioned as meeting points of the Roman elite. Illustrious Romans invited each other to their villas, had dinner, and enjoyed country life, and this could well be the starting point for learned and philosophical discussions. This is the setting relevant for the majority of Cicero's dialogues in which he explained Greek philosophy to his Roman readers. His dialogue persons are never ordinary people, but the most cultivated Romans of the first and second centuries BC, who shared their interest in Greek culture, literature, and philosophy. Some of them were themselves writers, scholars, or philosophers. These are the persons with which Petrarch loved to discuss. The humanist had a very imaginative if not romantic idea of Cicero's dialogues: he believed that they were actually held in the places and by the interlocutors Cicero evoked.<sup>52</sup> In his philosophical meditations, Petrarch tried to imitate Cicero: Vaucluse was his Tusculum, Cumae, or Arpinum, a place for philosophical debates. Interestingly, Petrarch had no preference for the literary genre of the dialogue, but more for letters and treatises addressed to somebody. "Dialogue" was for him in the first place meditation on and reception of Cicero's dialogues: a never-ending discussion with Cicero himself and his many illustrious contemporaries.

### The Solitary Valley and Christian Spirituality

It would be wrong, however, to consider Petrarch's imaginative solitary valley exclusively as a kind of neo-pagan construction. Petrarch conceived it as a highly spiritual landscape, and Saints such as John the Baptist figure in it; Church Fathers, such as Augustine; monks, such as the Carthusian Gherardo (Petrarch's brother, born in 1312);<sup>53</sup> bishops such as Philippe da Cabassoles and Veranus of Cavaillon,<sup>54</sup> and even Christ himself and Mother Mary.<sup>55</sup> In the second book of *De vita solitaria*, Petrarch presents John the Baptist, Mother Mary,

<sup>52</sup> In the majority of the cases, these were of course literary inventions.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. below, the section on *Bucolicum carmen* 1.

<sup>54</sup> For Veranus, see below.

<sup>55</sup> For example, cf. *infra*, the passage on the sanctuary dedicated to Mary, and on *Bucolicum carmen* 1.

and Jesus Christ as examples of *solitarii*.<sup>56</sup> Among other things, he ascribed to Christ the role of a god of inspiration; sometimes he identified him with Apollo. In his autobiography, *Epistola posteritati*, Petrarch claimed that he received his inspiration for the epos *Africa* in Vaucluse, on Good Friday, when watching the rock wall above the fountain of Vaucluse. In the introduction to *Africa*, he again refers to God's son and suggests that he had had a vision of Christ, who demonstrated his five wounds as a sign of his eternal victory.<sup>57</sup> In *De vita solitaria*, Petrarch says that even long ago he had wanted to erect an altar in his garden, under the rock wall, next to the fountain—an altar dedicated not to the nymphs or other deities from antiquity, but to Mother Mary<sup>58</sup>—and that he hopes that the Virgin herself will be present at the fountain of the Sorgue.<sup>59</sup> Petrarch probably got the idea of a fountain sanctuary through his reading of Seneca's *Epistulae ad Lucilium*;<sup>60</sup> it is a kind of Christian transformation of pagan grove or fountain sanctuaries dedicated to nymphs. The *tertium comparationis* of nymphs and Mary is, of course, virginity.

Furthermore, Petrarch enhanced the sacrality of his 'Closed Valley' by connecting it with the cult of a Christian local hero, St. Veranus of Cavaillon (born ca. 520), a contemporary of Gregory of Tours who had been elected bishop of Cavaillon in 565.<sup>61</sup> In Petrarch's day, the small parochial church of Fontaine de Vaucluse, where one could also venerate the saint's sarcophagus, was dedicated to St. Veranus and Mother Mary [Fig. 2.6].<sup>62</sup> In his drawing of Vaucluse as 'his hermitage' ('solitudo mea') Petrarch depicts a church on a hill, and it is probably this one [Fig. 2.2]. Veranus's most important miracle was that he

56 *De vita solitaria* II, in *Prose* (ed. Martellotti) 502–504.

57 Cf. Enenkel, *Die Stiftung von Autorschaft in der neulateinischen Literatur (ca. 1350–ca. 1650)* 448–449.

58 *De vita solitaria* II, in *Prose* (ed. Martellotti) 566: 'Quas (sc. aras) ego iampridem [...] illic, in ortulo meo, qui fontibus imminet ac rupibus subiacet, erigere meditor, non Nymphis, ut Seneca sentiebat, neque illis fontium fluminumque numinibus, sed Marie, cuius partus ineffabilis et fecunda virginitas omnes deorum aras ac templa subvertit'.

59 Ibidem: 'Aderit ipsa (sc. Maria) fortassis [...]'.

60 Ibidem; cf. Seneca, *Epistulae ad Lucilium* 41, 3.

61 For St. Veranus cf. Besson L., *Véran de Cavaillon, le saint, la source et le dragon*, Les Cahiers de L'Académie 2 (Beaumes-de-Venise: 1994); André J.F., *Histoire de Saint Véran, anachorète à Vaucluse, évêque de Cavaillon, ambassadeur du roi Gontran* (Paris: 1858); and Mathieu François, *La vie admirable du bienheureux saint Véran, évêque de Cavaillon et patron de la ville et du diocèse* (Avignon, Michel Chastel: 1665).

62 Nowadays, the sarcophagus is situated in the crypt of the church Notre-Dame-de-Fontaine-de-Vaucluse.

had killed a dangerous dragon in the area around Vaucluse.<sup>63</sup> Petrarch presents him as a hermit saint, a lover of solitude, who deliberately chose to live in Vaucluse in order to say farewell to the world.<sup>64</sup> Close to the fountain he had built his cell into the rock with his own hands, and furthermore, seemingly in the same way, he had erected a small shrine for Mother Mary.<sup>65</sup>



FIGURE 2.6 *Photograph of Notre-Dame-de-Fontaine-de-Vaucluse.*  
IMAGE © PUBLIC DOMAIN (PIXABAY).

63 Bayle G., "Le dragon de saint Véran", *Bulletin historique et archéologique de Vaucluse* 1881; Gregory of Tours, *Histoire des Francs* (*Historia Francorum*, trans. R. Latouche), vol. 3, 60 ("De miraculis sancti Martini") (Paris: 1980).

64 *De vita solitaria* 11, in *Prose* (ed. Martellotti) 566: 'Scis, quod Veranus tuus, Cristi confessor eximus, [...] querens locum pacis hic demum substiit pulsoque hinc dracone terribili sanctam ac solitariam vitam his duxit in locis'.

65 *Ibidem* 568: 'Cristo, cuius auspicii signoque vicerat, tropheum erexit (sc. Veranus) titulo Virginis genetricis insigne, templum exiguum, sed decorum et validum. Hunc ipse montem pervium fecit et hanc montanam preduramque silicem perforavit suis, ut aiunt, manibus, opus fervoris atque otii ingentis. Hic in ripa cellam habuit, Cristo dives, atque ortulo

When describing a typical day of the *solitarius* in *De vita solitaria*, Petrarch shapes its structure by combining landscape and religion, devoted prayer, and a stay outside in a natural environment, a countryside that resembles that of Vaucluse. During the day the *solitarius* prays the hours outside, in nature. Petrarch subtly connects the content of the prayers with the time of the day when they are said. He presents the cycle of the day, especially the course of the sun, as a sacred ritual, and he evokes the impression that the *solitarius* partakes in this ritual when he prays the hours.

The *solitarius* leaves his house early in the morning and remains outside the greater part of the day. Very early, i.e. between 5 and 6 o'clock, he goes for a walk into the neighbouring woods to experience sunrise in nature;<sup>66</sup> afterwards, he climbs a hilltop and sits down in the grass among flowers in order to pray the prime, i.e. around 6 o'clock. For his prayers he may also search for a classical *locus amoenus*, i.e. a combination of a brook, tree, and singing birds. Both the birds' songs and the babbling of the brook will stimulate the devotion of his prayers.<sup>67</sup> Petrarch probably had in mind an extended version of the prayers of the prime because immediately afterwards, while still on the hilltop or at the *locus amoenus*, the *solitarius* prays the *tertiae laudes*, i.e. around 9 o'clock. The rays of the sun symbolise for him the Holy Spirit, whom he asks to come down on us as a flame, and who brings forth in us flaming love for our fellow man.<sup>68</sup> On his way back, still in nature, the *solitarius* prays the sext, i.e. around 12 o'clock.<sup>69</sup> After a siesta he is again outside, for example at a sunny fountain ('*apricus fons*').<sup>70</sup> This refers clearly to the fountain of the Sorgue, which catches sunlight only in the afternoon. There the *solitarius* stays in order to engage in the afternoon prayers and, later, in an evening meditation.

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contentus et flumine'. After being destroyed, Notre-Dame-de-Fontaine-de-Vaucluse was rebuilt in the eleventh century.

66 Cf. *De vita solitaria* (ed. Enenkel) 1, 2, 5: 'Vadit iste (sc. solitarius) alacer in vicinam silvam, plenus otii plenusque silentii, et cum gaudio faustum limen serene lucis ingreditur'.

67 Ibidem 1, 2, 7: 'Iste (sc. solitarius) ubi primum floreum sedile salubremque nactus collem constituit, iubare iam solis exorto in diurnas Dei laudes pio letus ore prorumpens (eoque suavius, si devotis forte suspiriis lene murmur proni gurgitis aut dulces avium concinant querele) innocentiam in primis, lingue frenum litis nescium [...] deprecatur'.

68 Ibidem 1, 2, 8: 'Nec multo post, tertiiis in laudibus, tertiam in Trinitate personam veneratur et Sancti Spiritus poscit adventum [...] et caritatem celico igne flammandem ac proximos accensuram'.

69 Ibidem 1, 2, 9.

70 Ibidem 1, 2, 24.

## The Sacrality of the Open Sky and of the Mountain Top: Poetical Inspiration and Religious Meditation

As we have seen so far, in *De vita solitaria* there are certain elements that define the sacred place meant for religious devotion and writing. One of them definitely is a view of the *open sky*. Chapter 1, 7 of *De vita solitaria* is especially dedicated to this construction of the sacred place of writing.<sup>71</sup> Petrarch defends his view against the Roman rhetorician Quintilian of the first century AD, who in the tenth book of his *Institutio oratoria* advised intellectuals against composing works outdoors, e.g. on a *locus amoenus*—under a shady tree with birds singing, or in a garden or park.<sup>72</sup> According to Quintilian, writing should take place exclusively in a *studio*. Quintilian's main argument pertains to concentration. Beautiful nature, he says, will only distract the mind.

In Petrarch's view, however, the case is exactly the opposite: beautiful nature will optimise the writer's inspiration and power of invention, and walls will only diminish it. Thus, in *De vita solitaria*, the writer's place is always defined as a place outdoors. The process of composing literature is located there. Petrarch's author is a *walking writer*. He takes paper and pen with him, and on a spot that inspires him he will sit down and start to write.<sup>73</sup>

Petrarch advises this manner of writing especially for philosophers and poets, among whom he counts himself. They may sit down wherever they experience inspiration—under the open sky, under a rock, or in the shade of a large pine tree.<sup>74</sup> They do not need to consult many books: 'Non multorum evolutione voluminum est opus'.<sup>75</sup> They have read the necessary works before, and they keep their content in their minds. When they are inspired and start with their *inventio*, they will 'read in their minds, often even write in their minds': 'illis (voluminibus) iam ante perfectis in animo legunt, sepe etiam in animo scribunt'.<sup>76</sup> Thus, the sacred place brings forth an inspired, religious, and meditative manner of writing. The sacred place enables an author to 'write in his

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Enenkel, *Francesco Petrarca, De vita solitaria* 549–556.

<sup>72</sup> Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* X, 3, 22–25.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. also Petrarch, *Invective contra medicum*, ed. P.G. Ricci (Rome: 1978) 1, 27: '[...] ego florentes silvas et solitarios colles ambire soleo, nonnisi vel scientie cupiditate vel glorie'.

<sup>74</sup> *De vita solitaria* (ed. Enenkel) 1, 7, 9: 'impetum ingenii sequantur, considunt, ubicunque est animus, ubi locus tempusque suaserint aut ubi se stimulis maioribus adigi senserint, seu celo aperto, [...] seu solide rupis obtentu, seu patule pinus umbraculo'.

<sup>75</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>76</sup> Ibidem.

mind', to concentrate on his "inner view", i.e. speculation, and to reach a high philosophical level of writing.

Petrarch does not advise the writer to sit down in a dark house; a deep, dark wood with high, dense trees; a small garden surrounded by high walls or hedges; or a dark grotto or cave. He required a wide view, and he attributed to it a spiritual and religious function, as a kind of means to gain direct access to God. Petrarch's "open access" to heaven stimulates the 'raptus' of the mind, i.e. ecstasy or inspiration.<sup>77</sup> A maximum expanse of open sky will be provided by mountaintops. Therefore, these figure as sacred places *par excellence*. As we have seen above, Petrarch makes his *solitarius* stay in such places the whole morning, between ca. 6 and 11:30 am. In the seventh chapter of the first book, Petrarch advises the intellectual to sit down on a hilltop or mountaintop in order to experience the 'raptus':

Nempe supra humanum modum rapiantur oportet, si supra hominem loqui volunt: id sane locis apertissimis expeditius fieri interdum et alacrius animadverti.<sup>78</sup>

If one wants to bring forth something more excellent than ordinary people, it is necessary that one is lifted above the ordinary human level: I have experienced that this happens in an easier and more fruitful way in places under the open sky.

Although Petrarch mentions, literally, 'montes',<sup>79</sup> he does not, of course, urge the intellectual to always first climb a true mountaintop when he wants to write something. When he talks about mountains he usually thinks of the rocky hills that surround the valley of Vaucluse like a theatre. They are not very high, only some 150–250 metres above the valley, but all of them offer a tremendous view on the valley and its surroundings. Although Petrarch mostly associates them with 'woods' ('silvae'),<sup>80</sup> they were only sparsely covered with lower pine trees, so that it was rare for the walking writer to be covered by a roof of trees.

The sacred place of the hilltop is especially fruitful for religious meditation and self-reflection, historical thinking, and literary invention. In *De vita*

77 For this type of writer's inspiration, cf. Enenkel, *Francesco Petrarca, De vita solitaria* 549–556.

78 *De vita solitaria* (ed. Enenkel) 1, 7, 10.

79 E.g., *ibidem* 1, 7, 6: 'quamvis ego nusquam felicius quam in silvis ac montibus ingenium experiar [...].'

80 As *ibidem*, 'in silvis ac montibus'.

*solitaria*, Petrarch compares the hilltop with an observation tower ('specula'), from which one can watch from a distance human life ('res curasque hominum'), oneself, and the universe in transition.<sup>81</sup> To observe the transition of the universe would stimulate the Christian *meditatio mortis*; for Christians this meditation is not a source of depression and despair, but of hope and confidence. Furthermore, from the sacred place of the hilltop the author is able to observe the course of history, of all times and countries: 'mittere retro memoria perque omnia secula perque omnes terras animo vagari'.<sup>82</sup> Constructed in this way, historical thinking gets a religious and spiritual touch, similar to the communication with the supernatural. Petrarch experiences on the solitary hilltop a kind of religious historical 'raptus', an ecstasy that would enable him to speak directly to the important people of every age in history, especially the classical authors, as we have seen already with respect to his spiritual fountain with laurel trees, situated under his private 'Helicon transalpinus'.

### Vaucluse and the Desert of the Desert Fathers

As we have seen with the highly artificial construction of the 'Helicon transalpinus', it was certainly not only Petrarch's individual experience that contributed to the sacrality of his place of authorship. He drew on a number of literary, intellectual, and religious traditions, and their influence is so substantial that the limited space of this contribution does not allow the discussion of them all in full. For example, the holiness of the hilly and rocky landscape surrounding the 'Vallis clausa' is reinforced by the fact that Petrarch associated it with the hermitage of the desert fathers, the Egyptian and Syrian *anachoretae*, as described in the monk and hagiographer Palladius's (363/4–after 420) *Historica Lausiaca*,<sup>83</sup> furthermore, it was linked with the landscape of the Bible in which the heroes of the Old Testament figured (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses)—as

<sup>81</sup> Ibidem 1, 6, 5.

<sup>82</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>83</sup> Petrarch discussed the desert fathers especially in the first part of the second book of *De vita solitaria*, see *Prose* (ed. Martellotti) 406 ff.; the *Historia Lausiaca* was written 419/420 when Palladius was *praepositus sacri cubiculi* at the court of Theodosius II. For the early desert fathers cf. Harmless W., *Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism* (Oxford: 2004).

did prophets, such as Elias, Eliseus, and Jeremy<sup>84</sup>—and with the desert into which Christ withdrew for forty days in order to fast and to be tempted.<sup>85</sup>

The desert of the first hermits was in some cases represented by a rocky or hilly landscape, such as at Mount Colzim near the Gulf of Suez, where the famous hermitage of Antonius Abbas or Eremita (ca. 251–356 AD), an important founding father of the Eastern monks, was situated [Fig. 2.7].<sup>86</sup> Its sacrality was



FIGURE 2.7 *Photograph of Mount Colzim near the Gulf of Suez with the monastery of St. Antonius.*

IMAGE © BERTOLD WERNER (GNU FREE DOCUMENTATION LICENSE).

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84 Cf. *De vita solitaria*, in *Prose* (ed. Martellotti) 418 ff.: Abraham (418), Isaac (420), Jacob (422), and Moses (422–424); and the prophets Elias (424–426), Eliseus (426), and Jeremy (426–430).

85 For Christ as an exemplum of a hermit in the desert cf. *De vita solitaria*, in *Prose* (ed. Martellotti) 504.

86 Ibidem 414, where Petrarch explains the sacred places of the well-known ‘orientalium atque orientium monachorum princeps’; for Antonius Abbas/Eremita cf. Gemeinhardt P. *Antonius, der erste Mönch: Leben, Lehre, Legende* (Munich: 2013); Rubenson S., *The Letters of St. Antony: Origenist Theology, Monastic Tradition and the Making of a Saint*, Bibliotheca historico-ecclesiastica Lundensis 24 (Lund: 1990); Bautz F.W., art. “Antonius der Große”, in *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon (BBKL)*, vol. 1 (2nd ed. Hamm: 1990 [1975]), cols. 192–193.

defined by the fact that it was an extremely lonely place, far from the crowds that were eager to follow the holy man. Petrarch probably did not know exactly what type of landscape the desert at the Gulf of Suez was; he was not well acquainted with its geographical details, its fauna and flora. Apparently he thought that it was a landscape such as the one in Vaucluse, with a river, green trees, and rich vegetation. In Euagrius's translation of Athanasius's *Vita Antonii* Petrarch read that Antonius had been sitting next to a river ('ad ripam fluminis') in order to meditate,<sup>87</sup> and in Hieronymus's *Vita Pauli*, that Paul of Thebes and Antonius Abbas were sitting 'at the shore of a small fountain, in the shade of an old palm tree, in a very remote grove' ('ad ripam fontis exigui et veteris umbram palme, secretissima spelunca').<sup>88</sup> Because Petrarch quoted such details of the landscape setting it seems likely that he construed his "desert" by identifying it with European types of landscape, furnished with hills, meadows, mountains, woods, and rivers. After all, 'desertum' connotes in the first place a lonely place, uninhabited by human beings. Similarly, St. Antonius Abbas was depicted in European landscapes in many late medieval paintings, for example by Hieronymus Bosch in his *Temptations of Saint Anthony* (ca. 1500), which is kept in the Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga in Lisbon.<sup>89</sup>

Petrarch made use of the desert fathers in order to authorise his solitude in Vaucluse, although there were some marked differences. In the *Vitae patrum* and the *Lausiac History* a certain pattern always appears: the life organised as a continuous search for increasingly extreme forms of solitude, loneliness, and asceticism. The fathers withdrew deeper and deeper into the desert, and the most sacred spot was the least inhabited and civilised one. But Petrarch's solitude, albeit located in a remote valley, was definitely not in a completely uninhabited area outside of civilisation. Very close to Petrarch's sacred place was the castle of the bishop of Cavaillon (who was also Lord of Vaucluse) [cf. Fig 2.1] and his villa, a church (Notre-Dame-de-Fontaine-de-Vaucluse) [cf. Figs. 2.2 and 2.6], and a small adjacent village; there were always people working in the countryside (such as shepherds, peasants, and hunters);

87 Ibidem, and Euagrius, *Vita Antonii*, chapter 54, *Patrologia Latina* LXXIII, col. 158; cf. Bertrand P.H.E., *Die Evagriusübersetzung der Vita Antonii: Rezeption – Überlieferung – Edition. Unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Vitas Patrum-Tradition*, Ph.D. dissertation (Utrecht University: 2005).

88 *De vita solitaria, in Prose* (ed. Martellotti) 414. Cf. Hieronymus, *Vita Pauli, Patrologia Latina* XXIII, cols. 22–23.

89 For this topic see Philipp M. (ed.), *Schrecken und Lust: Die Versuchung des heiligen Antonius von Hieronymus Bosch bis Max Ernst* (Munich: 2008).

and in Petrarch's own house there were always at least the two servants who took care of his household, and sometimes visitors and friends of the poet. Petrarch construed his sacred place not as a freakish, uncivilised, and wild spot ('solitudo insolens, ferox, immanis').<sup>90</sup> He would not, as the desert fathers did, live in a hut or a cave, sleep on the ground, or walk around in rags or in the nude; rather, he would be adequately dressed, live in a decent house, sleep in a normal bed, have servants for a reasonable lifestyle, etc. Petrarch's sacred place can best be characterised by the so-called 'aurea mediocritas', as advocated by Horace ('Whoever loves the golden middle, will avoid to live in a shabby hut, but also avoid to get drunk in a palace that evokes jealousy'),<sup>91</sup> or Cicero's 'munditia', 'temperies', and 'mediocritas' advised in *De officiis*.<sup>92</sup> Petrarch emphasised that his ascetic lifestyle should always be different from the lives of the animals.<sup>93</sup> Whoever does not have a house and a bed, he states, resembles a bear, not a man.<sup>94</sup>

### Vaucluse and the Landscape of the Old Testament

Furthermore, Petrarch integrated into his construction of the *locus solitarius* the landscapes and spaces described in the Old Testament, and he appropriated them in a way similar to the one he took regarding the desert of the first hermits. In *De vita solitaria* he emphasises that the heroes of the Old Testament—Abraham, Moses, Isaac, and Jacob—mostly stayed outside of towns, especially when they had contact with God or experienced visions. To

90 *De vita solitaria* (ed. Enenkel), 1, 7, 20.

91 *Ibidem*: 'Ita plane sentio atque hunc medium inter extrema callem teneo'; cf. Horace, *Carmina* 11, 10, 5–8: 'Auream quisquis mediocritatem/ Diligit, [...] caret obsoleti/ Sordibus tecti, caret invidenda/ Sobrius aula'.

92 *De vita solitaria* 11, in *Prose* (ed. Martellotti) 514–516, where Petrarch criticises the way of life of the Indian Brahmins; Petrarch considers them animal-like because, as he states, they live outdoors, do not use or possess houses, walk around naked, do not care about food, do not sleep in beds, etc. Much better would be Cicero's rule of moderation: 'Nuditas namque illa non placet [...]. Non placet incuriositas belluina somni cibique [...]; placet hac in re, ut in multis, *Ciceronianae temperies*: "Adhibenda", inquit, "est munditia non odiosa neque exquisita nimis; tantum, que fugiat agrestem et inhumanam negligentiam. Eadem ratio est habenda vestitus, in quo, sicut in plerisque rebus *mediocritas* optima est".

93 *Ibidem* 516: 'Sit somnus brevis, cibus levis, potus facilis, humilis toga, modo aliiquid inter habitum ac thorum mensamque hominis et pecudis intersit'.

94 *Ibidem*: 'Totum vero sub divo tempus agere, non tam hominum quam ursorum iudico [...]:'

a certain extent, this corresponds simply with the historical facts—they were nomads. But perhaps more interesting is Petrarch's appropriation of the desert: for example, he states that when God appeared to him and he saw the three angels visiting him, Abraham was sitting 'in the grass in the countryside' ('in solo herbido et agresti'), 'in a small valley' ('in convalle'), and, as Flavius Josephus transmitted the story, under an oak tree called Mambre, which Petrarch renders as 'under the shade of an oak full of acorns' ('sub quercus umbra glandifere').<sup>95</sup> A small valley, grass, the shade of trees: painted in this way, the biblical landscape strangely resembles the landscape formation of Vaucluse. According to *Genesis* Abraham was actually sitting in the desert (in a place called Mambre, close to Hebron, in the land of Chanaa, i.e. on the West Bank) [Fig. 2.8], in the full sun, in front of his tent.<sup>96</sup> One can understand that the enormous heat in the desert may have produced a kind of *fata Morgana* in which angels appeared. That Abraham met the angels under an oak tree is based on Flavius Josephus's interpretation of *Genesis*; in addition, Josephus renders Abraham's tent ('tabernaculum') as a 'palace' ('aule/aula'), and the opening of the tent as 'doors' ('thyre');<sup>97</sup> the grass, however, is Petrarch's invention. Interestingly, Petrarch took over Josephus's oak but explicitly rejected the 'palace'.<sup>98</sup> The three angels have an important message for Abraham, the typological equivalent of the Annunciation: they foretell him that his wife Sarah, although eighty years old, will soon get pregnant. That there was also grass in Mamre Petrarch possibly deduced from the fact that there was a fountain

95 *De vita solitaria, in Prose* (ed. Martellotti) 418: '[...] pater Abraham non in palatiis interque delitias urbanas, sed in tabernaculis inque convallibus collocutorem Deum meruit [...]. Idem non in aula [...], sed in solo herbido et agresti, utque textus Geneseos habet, "in convalle", ut Iosephus, "ad ilicem Mambre" sedebat, quando dignus est habitus Dei angelos videre'. Petrarch refers to *Genesis* 18:1, and *Antiquitates* 1, 11, 2 (196), see below.

96 *Genesis* 18:1: 'Apparuit autem ei Dominus in convalle Mambre sedenti in ostio tabernaculi sui in ipso fervore diei'.

97 *Antiquitates* 1, 11, 2 (196). It was known, however, that there were trees/ oaks in Mamre; for example, in *Genesis* 16:8, Moses and the three angels are standing under a tree ('ipse vero stabat iuxta eos sub arbore'). Mamre's modern name is Elonei Mamre ('Oaks/ Terebinths of Mamre').

98 Petrarch says that Moses talked to God 'not in a palace hall full of tapestry [...], but sitting in the grass on the countryside'—'non in aula cortinis obsita [...], sed in solo herbido et agresti'. Cf. *De vita solitaria, in Prose* (ed. Martellotti) 418.



FIGURE 2.8 *Postcard showing the Oak of Mamre (1903).*

IMAGE © PUBLIC DOMAIN.

('fons') close to Mamre, the fountain where Abraham's maid Hagar was visited by an angel.<sup>99</sup> Anyway, Abraham had in Mamre a well ("Abraham's well").<sup>100</sup>

Equipped with such information, Petrarch assimilated the biblical desert into his Vaucluse of southern France. He achieved the same effect by identifying the biblical mountains with woods. For example, Petrarch says in *De vita solitaria* that Moses talked with God 'not in one of the towns of Syria and Egypt, but *in the woods* on the top of a very high mountain', by which he means Mount Sinai, where Moses received the *Decalogue*.<sup>101</sup> 'In the woods' is an appropriation made by Petrarch—Mount Sinai is a dry desert mountain, and the Bible does not say that there were woods growing on Mount Sinai.<sup>102</sup> Similar to Moses, Christ ascended a mountain in order to pray to God.<sup>103</sup> For him, too, the solitary environment of a mountain was a sacred place, meant especially for religious devotion.<sup>104</sup> Most importantly, Christ stayed forty days in the desert in order to experience temptation<sup>105</sup>—as Moses had stayed forty days in the desert—and fasted forty days and nights. In this way, typology plays an important part in Petrarch's construction of his sacred place in Vaucluse.

### Vaucluse and the Sacrality of the Bucolic Landscape

Another strategy that enhances the sacrality of the solitary space is how Petrarch's *Bucolicum carmen*<sup>106</sup> and *De vita solitaria*, as well as a number of his Latin prose letters (*Familiares*, *Variae*), identify the landscape of Vaucluse

99 *Genesis* 16:7: 'cumque invenisset illam (sc. Hagar) angelus Domini iuxta fontem aquae in solitudine [...]; referred to by Petrarch in *De vita solitaria*, in *Prose* (ed. Martellotti) 420.

100 Cf. Jericke D., *Abraham in Mamre: Historische und exegetische Studien zur Region von Hebron* (Leiden – Boston, MA: 2003), and Letellier R.I., *Day in Mamre, Night in Sodom: Abraham and Lot in Genesis 18 and 19* (Leiden – Boston, MA: 1995).

101 *De vita solitaria*, in *Prose* (ed. Martellotti) 422 (italics mine).

102 *Exodus* 24:12–25:1 ff.

103 *Matthew* 14:23.

104 *De vita solitaria*, in *Prose* (ed. Martellotti) 504–506.

105 *Mark* 1:12–13; *Matthew* 4:1–12; *Luke* 4:1–13; *De vita solitaria*, in *Prose* (ed. Martellotti) 504.

106 On Petrarch's reception of Virgil's *Eclogues* in the *Bucolicum carmen* see Berghoff-Bührer M., *Das Bucolicum carmen des Petrarca: Ein Beitrag zur Wirkungsgeschichte von Vergils Eclogen* (Bern: 1991); Carrai S., "Pastoral as Personal Mythology in History", in Kirkham – Maggi (eds.), *Petrarch 165–177*; cf. also the commented Latin edition with English translation: Bergin Th.G., *Petrarch's Bucolicum carmen* (New Haven, CT: 1974); Pétrarque, *Bucolicum carmen*, Lat. text and French trans. M. Francois and P. Bachmann with F. Roudaut (Paris: 2001).

with the idyllic, bucolic landscape from Virgil's *Eclogues*. In his *Eclogues*, Virgil composed highly symbolic and artificial landscapes, remote from the real world of Roman urban society—so remote that one may say that he construed a “Gegenwelt” (alternative world). Various symbolic landscape settings connected with poetry and poets play an important role in Virgil's bucolics, such as Sicily (Theocritus's homeland), Arcadia (land of the Greek shepherds),<sup>107</sup> or various *loci amoeni* (as sacred *Dichterörter*).<sup>108</sup> Poets, disguised as shepherds, are the main characters of the work.<sup>109</sup> In various ways, Virgil attributes to the landscape of his *Eclogues* a religious character. This is not to subscribe to the older theory that bucolic poetry might have originated in ancient religious cults.<sup>110</sup> After all, bucolic poetry is a Hellenistic—and essentially Theocritus's—invention. In any case, the landscape of Virgil's *Eclogues* is a literary construction that represents a sacred space, with sacred fountains (such as Arethusa on the island Ortygia, off Syracuse, in Sicily),<sup>111</sup> mountains (such as

<sup>107</sup> On Virgil's artificial and symbolic landscape settings in the *Eclogues* cf., *inter alia*, Flintoff E., “The Setting of Virgil's *Eclogues*”, *Latomus* 33 (1974) 814–846; Jachmann G., “L'Arcadia di Virgilio come passaggio bucolico”, *Maia* 5 (1952) 161–174; Jenkyns R., “Virgil and Arcadia”, *Journal of Roman Studies* 79 (1989) 26–39; idem, *Virgil's Experience: Nature and History, Times, Names, and Places* (Oxford: 1998); Leach E.W., *Vergil's Eclogues: Landscapes of Experiences* (Ithaca, NY: 1974); Snell B., “Arkadien: Die Entdeckung einer geistigen Landschaft”, in *Antike und Abendland* 1 (1945) 26–31 = idem, *Die Entdeckung des Geistes: Studien zur Entstehung des europäischen Denkens bei den Griechen* (5th ed. Göttingen: 1980) 257–274 = idem, “Arcadia: The Discovery of a Spiritual Landscape”, in idem, *The Discovery of the Mind: The Greek Origins of European Thought* (Oxford: 1953) 281–309; Binder G. – Effe B., *Antike Hirtendichtung* (2nd ed. Düsseldorf – Zurich: 2001), passim; Pöschl V., *Die Hirtendichtung Virgils* (Heidelberg: 1964), passim.

<sup>108</sup> On the *locus amoenus* cf. Haß P., *Der locus amoenus in der antiken Literatur: zu Theorie und Geschichte eines literarischen Motivs* (Bamberg: 1998); Schönbeck G., *Der Locus amoenus von Homer bis Horaz*, Ph.D. dissertation (Ruprecht-Karls University, Heidelberg: 1962); Garber K., *Der locus amoenus und der locus terribilis: Bild und Funktion der Natur in der deutschen Schäfer- und Landlebendichtung des 17. Jahrhunderts*, Literatur und Leben; N.F. 16 (Cologne – Vienna: 1974); Thoss D., *Studien zum locus amoenus im Mittelalter*, Wiener romanistische Arbeiten 10 (Vienna – Stuttgart: 1972). The interest in the *locus amoenus* was initiated by Curtius E.R., *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter* (8th ed. Bern – Munich: 1973 [1948]) 202–206.

<sup>109</sup> Cf., among others, Korenjak M., “Der antike Biographismus und die bukolische Tradition”, *Antike und Abendland* 43 (2003) 58–79; Herrmann L., *Les masques et les visages dans les Bucoliques de Virgile* (Brussels: 1930).

<sup>110</sup> For this theory, cf. Baudy G.J., “Hirtenmythos und Hirtenlied: Zu den rituellen Aspekten der bukolischen Dichtung”, *Poetica* 25 (1993) 282–318.

<sup>111</sup> *Eclogue* 10, 1. Arethusa was originally a nymph from Arcadia; when the river god Alpheus tried to seduce her, she was saved by Artemis, who turned her into a river which flowed

Maenalus in Arcadia),<sup>112</sup> trees (such as laurel trees and myrtles,<sup>113</sup> pines,<sup>114</sup> or oak trees<sup>115</sup>). In this sacred landscape gods are present, appear in epiphanies, or are invoked, such as Apollo; Silvanus; Pan;<sup>116</sup> Pallas;<sup>117</sup> Artemis;<sup>118</sup> Pales, the Roman deity of shepherds, flocks, and livestock;<sup>119</sup> Priapus;<sup>120</sup> Fauni;<sup>121</sup> various Nymphs,<sup>122</sup> such as Naiads (living in rivers)<sup>123</sup> and Dryads

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under the sea to Sicily (cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* V, 572–641). Cf. Coleman's commentary in Vergil, *Eclogues*, ed. R. Coleman (Cambridge: 1977) 275. Thus, Arethusa is the geographic, poetic, and mythologic link between Arcadia and Sicily.

<sup>112</sup> *Eclogue* 10, 15.

<sup>113</sup> Ibidem 7, 62.

<sup>114</sup> Ibidem 7, 24: 'sacra [...] pinu'—'on the holy pine tree'; the pine was sacred to Pan, the main god of Arcadia; cf. Propertius, *Elegiae* 1, 18, 20 'Arcadio pinus amica deo' —'the pine tree loved by the god of Arcadia'; as Virgil has it in the *Eclogues*, pines grew on Arcadia's major mountain, the Maenalus (8, 22–23). The mythical origin of the pine was the metamorphosis of the nymph Pitys, the Arcadian Pan's love; cf. Coleman's commentary in Vergil, *Eclogues* (ed. Coleman) 213–214.

<sup>115</sup> *Eclogue* 7, 13: '[...] eque sacra resonant examina quercu'—'(here) the swarming bees are buzzing under the sacred oak'; the oak was sacred to Jupiter.

<sup>116</sup> Ibidem 10, 21; 24–27; esp. 26: 'Pan deus Arcadiae venit, quem vidimus ipsi/ [...]']—'Pan appeared, the god of Arcadia, whom we saw ourselves [...]'].

<sup>117</sup> Ibidem 2, 61–62: 'Pallas quae condidit arces,/ Ipsa colat (sc. silvas)']—'Pallas who founded fortresses,/ herself loves the woods'.

<sup>118</sup> Ibidem 7, 29.

<sup>119</sup> Ibidem 5, 34–35. For the Roman deity Pales cf. Prescendi F., art. "Pales", in *Der neue Pauly* 9 (2000), cols. 186–187; Rhode G., art. "Pales", in *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, vol. 18, 3, cols. 89–97; Wissowa G., art. "Pales", in Roscher W.H. (ed.), *Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie*, vol. 3, 1 (Leipzig: 1902), cols. 1276–1280; and Heurgon J., "Au dossier de Pales", *Latomus* 10 (1951) 277–278. Pales's temple in Rome (now lost) had been built by Marcus Atilius Regulus in 267 BC. There was some discussion as to whether Pales was female or male (cf. Prescendi, "Pales"); Virgil clearly considered her female ('ipsa Pales'), and so did Petrarch, cf. *Bucolicum carmen* 1, line 12. Some modern scholars associated her with the Parilia, celebrated on Rome's birthday, 21 April; this, however, is speculative and not generally accepted.

<sup>120</sup> *Eclogue* 7, 33–34: 'Priape [...]/ custos es pauperis horti'—'Priapus [...]/ the guardian of a simple garden'.

<sup>121</sup> Ibidem 6, 27.

<sup>122</sup> Ibidem 5, 20–21; 10, 1 (Arethusa); the shepherd Corydon invokes the water nymphs of mount Helicon, the Libethrides, (identical to the Muses) in 7, 21–22, and in 7, 37–40 the sea-nymph Galathea, the daughter of Nereus, who is also invoked by Moeris in 9, 39 ff.: 'huc ades, o Galatea; [...] / Hic ver purpureum [...]'.

<sup>123</sup> Ibidem 10, 9–10.

(living in trees);<sup>124</sup> the mythical shepherd-singer Daphnis,<sup>125</sup> son of Hermes and the nymph Daphne ('Laurel'); the spirit of the dead poet Gallus;<sup>126</sup> and heroes, such as Paris.<sup>127</sup> In *Eclogue* 6, 13–15, we are told that two young shepherds ('pueri'), Chromis and Mnasyllos, discovered Silenus laying a grove, drunk and asleep, as usual.<sup>128</sup> Accompanied by the beautiful Naiad Aegle, they approach him curiously and tie him up.<sup>129</sup> In their epiphanies the gods talk to the mortals and give them advice.<sup>130</sup> For example, at the beginning of *Eclogue* 6 Apollo appears to Tityrus and asks him 'to sing a subtle song'.<sup>131</sup> Sometimes the gods temporarily leave the sacred space of the bucolic landscape—as Apollo and Pales did after the death of Daphnis<sup>132</sup>—which disturbs the sacred circle of life and causes infertility. The mythical shepherd Daphnis is venerated as a god, interestingly, by the landscape itself: it is the mountains, rocks, and trees that hail him: 'deus, deus ille [...]'!<sup>133</sup> In the Arcadian landscape various religious rites take place. Altars are erected there to the gods, for example, to Apollo and Daphnis,<sup>134</sup> and statues are dedicated, for example, to Priapus!<sup>135</sup> and Artemis.<sup>136</sup> The shepherds are deeply pious people: they venerate the gods in religious rites, through their songs, by making vows,<sup>137</sup> and by bringing

<sup>124</sup> Ibidem 5, 59.

<sup>125</sup> Ibidem 5, 20 ff. For Daphnis cf. Stoll H.W., art. "Daphnis", in Roscher W.H. (ed.), *Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie*, vol. 1, 1 (Leipzig: 1886), cols. 955–961.

<sup>126</sup> *Eclogue* 10 *passim*.

<sup>127</sup> Ibidem 2, 60–61: 'Habitarunt di quoque silvas/ Dardaniusque Paris [...]—'the gods too lived in the woods/ and so did the Trojan Paris [...]'.

<sup>128</sup> '[...] Chromis et Mnasyllos in antro/ Silenum pueri somno videre iacentem,/ Inflatum hesterno venas, ut semper, Iaccho'.

<sup>129</sup> *Eclogue* 6, 18 ff.

<sup>130</sup> Ibidem 10, 21–23; 28–30; 6, 3–5; in 6, 23 ff. Silenus talks to the young shepherds Chromis and Mnasyllos, and he sings a song to them.

<sup>131</sup> In *ibidem* 6, 3–5, Apollo admonishes Tityrus to sing a subtle song, by which he obviously means an eclogue ('Cynthius aurem/Vellit et admonuit: "pastorem, Tityre, pinguis/ Pascere oportet ovis, deductum dicere carmen"'). From the following verses it appears that Virgil identified himself with Tityrus.

<sup>132</sup> Ibidem 5, 34–35.

<sup>133</sup> Ibidem 5, 64.

<sup>134</sup> Ibidem 5, 65–66.

<sup>135</sup> Ibidem 7, 35–36: 'Nunc te [sc. Priape] marmoreum pro tempore fecimus; at tu,/ Si fetura gregem suppleverit, aureus esto'—'Now, for the time being, we made a statue of you from marble./ If fertility will increase our flock, you shall be from gold'.

<sup>136</sup> A statue made from marble, with high, laced hunting shoes, cf. *ibidem* 7, 31–32.

<sup>137</sup> E.g. *ibidem* 5, 74–81.

them offerings—for example, the shepherd Corydon offers the head of a wild boar and the horns of a deer to Artemis,<sup>138</sup> and the shepherd Menalcas offers to Daphnis two 'pocula' of milk and a large crater of olive oil.<sup>139</sup>

In his *Eclogues*, Virgil conceived of his poetic landscape not as a densely populated area, but as a mountainous, hilly, rocky, and solitary one, with many groves and full of trees; "Arcadia" is characterised by 'woods' ('silvae'). In a programmatic line sung by Corydon, Virgil says: 'nobis placeant ante omnia silvae' ('may we love the woods above all other things').<sup>140</sup> For example, *Eclogue 2* is located in a lonely place 'in the mountains and in the woods' ('montibus et silvis', line 5), where the lovesick shepherd Corydon goes in order to be alone ('solus', line 4) and sing 'under the dense roof of shadowy beech trees' ('inter densas, umbrosa cacumina, fagos', line 3) love songs about his unfulfilled love. In this landscape there are also fountains, springs, and rivers. Virgil's lonely woods and mountains represent a sacred space in which holy rituals are not only performed, but the landscape actively partakes in them. More than once the mountains and the woods sing together with the shepherds;<sup>141</sup> for example, in 10, 8: Non canimus surdis, respondent omnia silvae'—'We do not sing for deaf ears, since the woods respond to all of our songs'. It is revealing to see that Petrarch transferred this impressive line to the composition of his treatise *De vita solitaria*; in the introductory part he says 'non canimus surdis',<sup>142</sup> by which he means that he does not write for townspeople or modern mainstream intellectuals; rather, the composition of *De vita solitaria* is a spiritual act, similar to the invention of the *Bucolicum carmen*. It is inspired by and directed to the *locus sacer*.

In this sacred landscape the activities of the shepherds are described as rituals. The most important one is probably the performance of the songs by the shepherds. This performance is not only embedded in, but also evoked by, a certain topical landscape setting which is known under the *terminus technicus* "Lagerungsmotiv".<sup>143</sup> When the shepherds are going to sing (or play the flute) they always first sit down under a shadowy tree in the grass or on a rock. As it

<sup>138</sup> Ibidem 7, 29–30; ibidem, shepherd Thyrsis offers milk to Priapus; in 7, 24, shepherd Corydon potentially offers his pipes to Pan.

<sup>139</sup> Ibidem 5, 67–68.

<sup>140</sup> Ibidem 2, 62.

<sup>141</sup> This may be connected with the effect of echo, but nevertheless, Virgil attributes to it a magical character, since 'respondere' refers to the alternate singing of shepherds.

<sup>142</sup> *De vita solitaria* (ed. Enenkel) I, 1, 3.

<sup>143</sup> For its topical and symbolic character, cf. Smith P.L., "Lentus in umbra: A Symbolic Pattern in Vergil's *Eclogues*", *Phoenix* 19 (1965) 298–303, and Curtius, *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter* 197–200.

seems, this *Dichterort* has—almost automatically—an inspiring effect: it is the sacred *Dichterort* that brings forth poetry.

It is revealing to see that Petrarch was inspired by Virgil's bucolic *Lagerungsmotiv* in *De vita solitaria*, and how he transferred it to Vaucluse; here again, one can speak of a *translatio imperii* in terms of literature. Virgil's first eclogue starts with 'Tityre, tu patulae recubans sub tegmine fagi' ('Tityrus, you lay down under the roof of a broad beech tree'): <sup>144</sup> in *De vita solitaria*, the poet sits down 'patule *pinus* umbraculo' ('under the shadow of a broad pine tree'). <sup>145</sup> This is a realistic element that points to Petrarch's solitary place: the Vaucluse valley is full of pine trees. Like Virgil, Petrarch identified himself with the shepherd Tityrus. <sup>146</sup> It was Virgil (supported by Augustus) who was able to lead the life of a poet, as Tityrus does in the first eclogue. *Mutatis mutandis* the same is true for Silvius-Petrarch, the man who (supported by Cardinal Giovanni Colonna) lived in the woods and composed verses. Especially revealing for Petrarch's identification with Tityrus is *Familiares* 11, 11, 1: it is a short letter in which Petrarch invites Agapito Colonna to his house in Vaucluse. He promises to serve Agapito 'mitia poma, castanee molles et pressi copia lactis' ('sweet apples, soft chestnuts, and a lot of fresh cheese'); this is a literal quote from Virgil, *Eclogue* 1, 80–81; it is Tityrus who uses these words in order to invite his friend Meliboeus for dinner. <sup>147</sup> Thus, it is Petrarch who figurates as Tityrus, and Agapito Colonna who appears as the shepherd Meliboeus. Besides, like Petrarch, Virgil's Tityrus lives in the woods, composes

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<sup>144</sup> For the first eclogue, cf. e.g. Roberts J.T., "Carmina nulla canam: Rhetoric and Poetic in Virgil's First Eclogue", *The Classical World* 76 (1983) 193–199; Dick B.F., "Vergil's Pastoral Poetic: A Reading of the First Eclogue", *American Journal of Philology* 91 (1970) 277–293; Fedeli P., "Sulla prima bucolica di Virgilio", *Giornale italiano di filologia* 24 (1972) 273–300; Klingner F., "Vergils erste Ekloge", *Hermes* 62 (1927) 129–153; idem, "Das erste Hirtengedicht Vergils", in idem, *Römische Geisteswelt* (5th ed. Stuttgart: 1979 [1965]) 312–326; Noché A., "Une interprétation de la première Églogue", *Humanités* 28 (1955/56) 6–8.

<sup>145</sup> *De vita solitaria* (ed. Enenkel) 1, 7, 9.

<sup>146</sup> For Virgil's identification with Tityrus see Korenjak M., "Tityri sub persona: Der antike Biographismus und die bukolische Tradition", *Antike und Abendland* 49 (2003) 58–79; on Petrarch's identification with Virgil's Tityrus cf. Carrai, "Pastoral as Personal Mythology in History" 169.

<sup>147</sup> In Virgil, *Eclogue* 1, 79–81, Tityrus invites Meliboeus: 'Hic tamen hanc mecum poteras requiescere noctem/ Fronde super viridi. Sunt nobis mitia poma,/ Castaneae molles et pressi copia lactis [...].'

verses in the shadows,<sup>148</sup> venerates a love with his poems,<sup>149</sup> enjoys *otium*,<sup>150</sup> and stays by the river and a fountain.<sup>151</sup>

Krautter has emphasised the novelty of Petrarch's poetical approach insofar as Petrarch explicitly locates his *Bucolicum carmen* in a "realistic" geographical setting—Vaucluse—and insofar as he connects the bucolic life with his own lifestyle, which is, as he claims, 'solitary', whereas Virgil's shepherds sing their songs in a highly artificial landscape, the Arcadia of fantasy.<sup>152</sup> It is certainly true that Petrarch identified his bucolic landscape with that of Vaucluse. And, one may add, he certainly also identified the landscape of Vaucluse with that of Virgil's *Eclogues*. This was, after all, not very difficult or farfetched—in fact, most of the ingredients were already there: mountains, rocks, woods, fountains, *loci amoeni*, shepherds and flocks, solitude, and even pine trees and laurels.

Whereas in his *Bucolicum carmen* Petrarch pushed the allegorical mode to the extreme,<sup>153</sup> he also clarified the interpretation by a complete explanation of his first eclogue in a Latin prose letter, *Familiares* x, 4, addressed to his brother Gherardo:

It was my intention that the poem has the following sense: The shepherds speaking with each other are both of us; I am Silvius, and you are Monicus. The sense of the names is as such: I am called Silvius—i.e. the man dwelling in the woods—first because for me, everything takes place in the woods, second because from young age I have hated the town and

<sup>148</sup> Ibidem 1, 1–5, Meliboeus says to Tityrus: 'Tityre, tu patulae recubans sub tegmine fagi/ Silvestrem tenui Musam meditaris avena; tu, Tityre, *lentus in umbra/ Formonsam resonare doces Amaryllida silvas*'.

<sup>149</sup> Tityrus sings love songs about Amaryllis; cf. ibidem, passim.

<sup>150</sup> Ibidem 1, 6, Tityrus says: 'O Meliboe, deus nobis haec otia fecit'.

<sup>151</sup> Ibidem 1, 51, Meliboeus says to Tityrus: 'Fortunate senex, hic inter flumina nota/ Et fontis sacros frigus captabis opacum'.

<sup>152</sup> Krautter, *Die Renaissance der Bukolik* 106–107; 106: 'Dass der Dichter ausdrücklich eine solche Beziehung zwischen individueller Selbst- und Welterfahrung und poetischer Produktion herstellt, ist nicht nur innerhalb der von Dante eingeleiteten neuen bukolischen Tradition, sondern überhaupt in der Geschichte der Hirtendichtung ein bedeutsames Novum'. In a Latin letter Petrarch states that he actually wrote his *Bucolicum carmen* in the solitude of Vaucluse (*Epistole variae* 49).

<sup>153</sup> For the allegorical mode in early Renaissance pastoral poetry, and especially in Petrarch's *Bucolicum carmen* cf. Krautter, *Die Renaissance der Bukolik* for Petrarch's reception of Virgil's *Eclogues* Berghoff-Bührei, *Das Bucolicum carmen des Petrarca* zur.

loved woods; that's why many contemporaries call me in all laguages not Franciscus, but Silvanus.<sup>154</sup>

The town is of course Avignon, the modern Babylon, the hell on earth.

Most revealing is the phrase 'because for me, everything takes place in the woods'. For Silvius-Petrarch, the woods of the Vaucluse represent the landscape of his mind, his philosophical thoughts, and his religious and poetic imagination. He walks around in the valley physically and mentally. Not coincidentally, the first eclogue is again a meditation about the lifestyle, the *vita solitaria*, Petrarch's favourite topic; he discusses it with his brother who had become a monk, *monachus*; hence his name Monicus. Monicus lives in a highly sacred place in the valley, the so-called silent grove ('tranquillum antrum').<sup>155</sup> Monicus-Gherardo has found the best place for his bucolic *Lagerung*, i.e. the true *solitary life*: the 'silent grove' represents his Carthusian monastery of Montrieu; *silentium* is the trademark of this contemplative order.

The wood-dweller Silvius, on the other hand—i.e. Petrarch—has not yet found peace. He depicts himself as the *walking writer* who sweats and sighs when climbing one hilltop after another. In this allegorical formation, the hilltops are not exclusively the most sacred places: in the first eclogue, they also symbolise Petrarch's longing for worldly fame via poetry, and his dependence on mighty mecenasses, such as Cardinal Giovanni Colonna and King Robert of Anjou. However, in a sense the hilltops are still sacred, because Petrarch receives there the inspiration for his poetry; the inspiring spirits are again the Muses,<sup>156</sup> who lived with Petrarch, but also Virgil, called Parthenias (i.e. 'the man from Naples'), and Homer, 'the noble shepherd arriving from foreign shores whose birthplace is not known to me and who does not sing in our language'.<sup>157</sup>

In the allegorical landscape of the first eclogue we can observe a certain clash of sacralities or sacred spots. The most sacred place is the most shadowy

<sup>154</sup> cf. Petrarch, *Familiarium rerum libri*, ed. V. Rossi (Turino: 1968) x, 4, 20 ff.: ' [...] intentio-  
nis autem mee sensus hic est: pastores colloquentes nos sumus; ego Silvius, tu Monicus.  
Nominum ratio hec est: primi quidem tum quod in silvis res acta est tum propter insi-  
tum ab ineunte etate urbis odium amoremque silvarum, propter quem multi ex nostris in  
omni sermone sepius me Silvanum quam Franciscum vocant; [...]'. In *Bucolicum carmen*  
10, Petrarch speaks through the character Silvanus.

<sup>155</sup> *Bucolicum carmen* 1, line 2.

<sup>156</sup> Ibidem, lines 40–44: 'Nitar, si forte Camene/ Dulce aliquid dictare velint, quod collibus  
altis/ Et michi complaceat, quod lucidus approbet ether;/ Non rauce leve murmur aque,  
nec cura, nec ardor,/ Defuerint. [...]':

<sup>157</sup> Ibidem, lines 20–45; esp. 20–21: 'Ecce peregrinis generosus pastor ab oris/ Nescio qua de  
valle, canens nec murmure nostro [...].'

one, and this is the 'silent grove' of the shepherd Monicus, i.e. Gherardo. It is on this spot where the most sacred figures appear: King David, John the Baptist, and Christ.<sup>158</sup> The river Sorgue turns into the holy river Jordan;<sup>159</sup> the silent grove, i.e. the Carthusian monastery, is the place where one can observe the shepherd David singing in the middle of the night, i.e. David sings his famous psalms of the hours of the night.<sup>160</sup> And here, according to Monicus-Gherardo, Christ himself will be.<sup>161</sup> Silvius-Petrarch, however, identifies Christ with the lord of the fountain, Apollo; he upgrades the Sorgue by imagining Apollo standing in the river, being baptised by the 'boy in hairy clothes' ('puer hispidus'), i.e. St. John. Monicus invites Silvius to join him in the 'silent grove' and to listen to David's psalms, and he tries to persuade him about their sweetness and poetic power.<sup>162</sup> Silvius-Petrarch, however, cannot accept, since he is attracted by another divinity, the Muse: 'Urget amor Muse'.<sup>163</sup> The Muse's place is not the 'silent grove', but the fountain at the end of the valley next to Petrarch's house. The Muse urges Petrarch to go home and to sing about 'a young man fallen from the stars', i.e. Scipio Africanus—this means that the Muse urges Petrarch to compose his Latin epos *Africa*, and this is of course something different from entering the Carthusian order and listening to David's songs. There remains a marked difference between Monicus's narrow 'silent grove', and Silvius's more open valley with its fountain, river, woods, and rocky hills.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, with respect to Petrarch's conception of the contemplative life and of authorship, a number of things are remarkable: first, of course, that the *locus* and its landscape setting played such an important role. This is not the case with medieval treatises on the contemplative or monastic life. Petrarch, however, conceived the contemplative life as a *solitudo loci*, always stressed the importance of the place, and, as we have seen, construed it as a sacred place and in a complex way, by using a number of different strategies

<sup>158</sup> Ibidem, lines 53–74; for David, see esp. 55–58; 70–74; 90 ff.

<sup>159</sup> Ibidem, lines 62–69.

<sup>160</sup> Ibidem, lines 55–56: 'Dulcius hic [i.e. in antro tranquillo] quanto media sub nocte videbis/ Psallere pastorem!'

<sup>161</sup> Ibidem, lines 62–64.

<sup>162</sup> Ibidem, lines 91–109.

<sup>163</sup> Ibidem, line 112.

and by drawing on different lines of tradition from antiquity and Christianity. Furthermore, it is important that he construes the sacred place explicitly as personal and private property. What is the strategy behind this? I think that the main reason behind Petrarch's eye-catching constructions is his longing for authorisation for his new and unusual type of authorship. It is, of course, still open to discussion how exactly one should define his humanism; however, it is clear that Petrarch composed unusual works, with remarkable content, outside the intellectual mainstream; the revival of antiquity and autobiography were only two of his major topics, and these were a bit eccentric in the middle of the fourteenth century. I suspect that the special character of his works required special attention if one wanted to legitimise them. That is why Petrarch claimed a special position adorned with sacred elements. And I think that one contribution to the success of his self-construction was that this construction was connected with visual elements that had a strong symbolic and typological value: the 'closed', valley 'Vallis clausa', separated from the *mundus*; the mountains of contemplation; the fountain of Apollo and the Muses; the transalpine Helicon; the laurels of the poet laureate; the hermitage of the desert fathers; Virgil's bucolic landscape; the Holy Land of the Bible, and so on. By carefully connecting these elements with his personal life Petrarch creates typological authorisations for his lifestyle and authorship. Typology had the advantage, among other things, of also exerting its power when, in real life, Petrarch did something else. Typology did not require that the poet stay all the time in Vaucluse, which would have been difficult for him, given his ambitions and obligations. The typological constructions were so convincing that at times it was enough to demonstrate the poet's longing for the *locus sacer*: the typologies of the *locus sacer* exerted their authorising power anywhere the poet actually stayed.

## Appendix

Petrarch, *Bucolicum Carmen*, Eclogue 1 ("Parthenias", "The Man from Naples"), Latin and English text<sup>164</sup>

Silvius and Monicus

SILVIUS	Monice, tranquillo solus tibi conditus antro, Et gregis et ruris potuisti spernere curas. Ast ego dumosos colles silvasque pererro Infelix. Quis fata neget diversa gemellis? Una fuit genitrix; at spes non una sepulcri!	5
MONICUS	Silvi, quid quereris? Cunctorum vera laborum Ipse tibi causa es. Quis te per devia cogit? Quis vel inaccessum tanto sudore cacumen Montis adire iubet, vel per deserta vagari Muscososque situ scopulos fontesque sonantes?	10
SILVIUS	Hei michi! Solus Amor. Sic me venerata benigne Aspiciat spes nostra Pales! Dulcissimus olim Parthenias michi iam puero cantare solebat Hic, ubi Benacus vitrea pulcherrimus alvo Persimilem natum fundit sibi. Venerat etas Fortior; audebam, nullo duce, iam per opacum Ire nemus nec lustra feris habitata timebam Mutatamque novo frangebam carmine vocem Emulus, et fame dulcedine tactus inani: Ecce peregrinis generosus pastor ab oris, Nescio qua de valle, canens nec murmure nostro, Percussit flexitque animum. Mox omnia cepi Temnere, mox solis numeris et carmine pasci. Paulatim crescebat amor. Quid multa? Canendo	15 20

<sup>164</sup> The Latin text is based on Petrarch's autograph, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. Lat. 3358. For the English translation see Thomas Bergin's, in Molinaro J.A., *From Petrarch to Prandello: Studies in Italian Literature in Honor of Beatrice Corrigan* (Toronto: 1973) 6 ff.

Quod prius audieram, didici, Musisque coactis, 25  
 Quo michi Parthenias biberet de fonte, notavi.  
 Nec minus est ideo cultus michi; magnus uterque,  
 Dignus uterque coli, pulcra quoque dignus amica.  
 Hos ego cantantes sequor et divellere memet  
 Nec scio nec valeo; mirorque, quod horrida nondum 30  
 Silva nec aerii ceperunt currere montes.  
 Verum ubi iam videor collectis viribus olim  
 Posse aliquid, soleo de vertice montis ad imas  
 Ferre gradum valles; ibi fons michi sepe canenti  
 Plaudit et arentes respondent undique cautes. 35  
 Vox mea non ideo grata est michi, carmina quanquam  
 Laudibus interdum tollant ad sidera Nimphe.  
 Dum memini, quid noster agat quidve advena pastor,  
 Uror et in montes flammata mente revertor.  
 Sic eo, sic redeo. Nitar, si forte Camene 40  
 Dulce aliquid dictare velint, quod collibus altis  
 Et michi complacet, quod lucidus approbet ether;  
 Non rauce leve murmur aque nec cura nec ardor  
 Defuerint. Si fata viam et mens tarda negarit,  
 Stat, germane, mori. Nostrorum hec summa laborum. 45

MONICUS O! si forte queas durum hoc transcendere limen.  
 Quid refugis turpesque casas et tuta pavescis  
 Otia? Quid frontem obducis? Nemo antra coactus  
 Nostra petit; plures redeunt a limine frustra.

SILVIUS Non pavor hic animi fuerat; si forsitan aures, 50  
 Dulcibus assuetas, inamena silentia tangunt,  
 Miraris? Natura quidem fit longior usus.

MONICUS O iterum breve si mecum traducere tempus  
 Contingat sileatque fragor rerumque tumultus,  
 Dulcius hic quanto media sub nocte videbis  
 Psallere pastorem! Reliquorum oblia sensim 55  
 Ingeret ille tibi; non carmen inane negabis,  
 Quod modo sollicitat, quod te suspendit hiantem.

SILVIUS Quis, queso, aut quonam genitus sub sidere pastor  
 Hoc queat? Audivi pastorum carmina mille, 60  
 Mille modos. Quenquam nostris equare caveto!

MONICUS      Audisti, quo monte duo fons unicus edit  
                   Flumina sive ubinam geminis ex fontibus unum  
                   Flumen aquas sacrumque caput cum nomine sumit?      65

SILVIUS      Audivi, ut quondam puer hispidus ille nitentis  
                   Lavit Apollineos ad ripam gurgitis artus.  
                   Felices Limphe, que corpus tangere tanti  
                   Promeruere dei! Fluvius, si vera loquuntur,  
                   Per cinerum campos ultricibus incidit undis.      70

MONICUS      Hunc igitur, dulci mulcentem sidera cantu,  
                   Illa tulit tellus; licet experiare iuvabit.      75

SILVIUS      O ego novi hominem! Cives et menia parve  
                   Sepe Ierosolime memorat, nec vertitur inde;  
                   Semper habet lacrimas et pectore raucus anelat.  
                   Hi Romam Troiamque canunt et prelia regum,  
                   Quid dolor et quid amor possit quidve impetus ire,  
                   Qui fluctus ventosque regat, qui spiritus astra;  
                   Necnon et triplicis sortitos numina regni  
                   Expingunt totidem, varia sed imagine, fratres;  
                   Sceptriferum summumque Iovem facieque serena,  
                   Inde tridentiferum moderatoremque profundi  
                   Ceruleumque comas medium fuscumque minorem;  
                   Torua latus servat coniunx aterque paludis  
                   Navita Tartaree piceas redit itque per undas,  
                   Tergeminusque canis latrat; tum dura severis  
                   Pensa trahunt manibus, fixa sub lege, sorores;  
                   Quin etiam Stigias eterna nocte tenebras  
                   Anguicomasque simul Furias templumque forumque,  
                   Tum silvas et rura canunt atque arma virosque  
                   Et totum altisonis illustrant versibus orbem.      85

MONICUS      Hic unum canit ore deum, quem turba deorum  
                   Victa tremit, celum nutu qui temperat almum,  
                   Ethera qui librat liquidum, qui roris aceruos,  
                   Quique nives spargit gelidas et nube salubri  
                   Elicit optatos herbis sientibus imbræ;  
                   Qui tonat et trepidum rapidis quatit aera flammis,  
                   Tempora sideribus, qui dat sua semina terris;  
                   Qui pelagus fluitare iubet, consistere montes;      95

Qui corpus mentemque dedit, quibus addidit artes  
 Innumerat, geminum cumulans ab origine munus; 100  
 Qui vite mortisque vices, queque optima fessos  
 Fert super astra, viam docuit repetitque monendo.  
 Hunc meus ille canit; neu raucum dixeris, oro:  
 Vox solida est penetransque animos dulcore latenti.  
 Iure igitur, patriis primum celebratus in arvis,  
 Attigit et vestros saltus, lateque sonorum  
 Nomen habet: que rura Padus, que Tybris et Arnus,  
 Que Rhenus Rodanusque secant, queque abluit equor  
 Omnia iam resonant pastoris carmina nostri.

SILVIUS Experiar, si fata uolent; nunc ire necesse est. 110

MONICUS Quo precor aut quis te stimulus, que cura perurget?

Urget amor Muse; quoniam modo litore in Afro  
 Sidereum iuvenem genitumque a stirpe deorum  
 Fama refert magnis impletum pascua factis;  
 Te, Polipheme, tuis iam vi stravisse sub antris  
 Dicitur et Lybicos silvis pepulisse leones  
 Lustraque submissis audax incendere flammis.  
 Hunc simul Italidesque nurus puerique senesque  
 Attoniti adverso certatim a litore laudant.  
 Carmine fama sacro caret hactenus et sua virtus  
 Premia deposita. Pavitans ego carmina cepi  
 Texere. Tentabo ingenium, vox forte sequetur:  
 Orpheus promeritum modulabor harundine parva. 120

MONICUS I sospes variosque vie circumspice casus.

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SILVIUS Monicus, hidden away alone in your quiet cavern,  
 You have been free to ignore the cares of the flock and the pastures;  
 I must continue to range over thorny hills and through thickets.  
 Destiny—Who could deny it?—has shaped different lots for twin  
 brothers,  
 Born of one mother but having no hope of last rest together.

MONICUS Silvius, why do you grumble? The true cause of all your troubles  
 Lies in yourself and no other. Who leads you into such pathways?  
 Who, pray, bids you ascend with so much painful exertion  
 Lofty, unscaled mountain peaks, or to wander through desert  
 wastelands,  
 Over moss-covered crags or where lonely cataracts thunder?

SILVIUS Love 'tis, alas, only love. May Pales, our hope, whom I worship,  
 Graciously look upon me. Time was, the gentle Parthenias,  
 (True, 't was a long time ago, in my boyhood) was wont to sing with me  
 There, where Benacus, made fair by crystalline waters transparent,  
 Sends forth an offspring like to itself. But an age followed after  
 Bolder; I dared with no guide make my own way into the forest,  
 Dense as it was, unafraid of the savage beasts that roamed in it.  
 There, in a voice now changed, I broke into new song and new  
 measures,  
 Lured by the charm of false glory, driven by keen emulation.  
 Lo, then there came a generous shepherd from far away meadows,  
 Native of what vale I know not, but with song not couched in our  
 language,  
 Stirring and moving my soul so that only in notes and in numbers,  
 Only with song was I happy, all other matters despising;  
 Little by little love grew; what more to tell you? Why, briefly,  
 Later, comparing their muses I learned, and in practice of verses,  
 What I had heard by report: the source my Parthenias drank of.  
 Not that I honour him less, for truly both are great masters,  
 Both most worthy of awe and of the fair mistress they cherish.  
 Let them but utter a note and I follow, for truly to leave them  
 Neither my strength nor my wit avails. I cannot but wonder  
 How it can be that their songs have not moved wild forests and  
 mountains.  
 Some days, when I have summoned my strength and feel I am ready,  
 Down from the loftiest summit I make my way to the valleys  
 Depths, where a gushing spring sometimes applauds my singing,  
 Where from all sides the arid rocks seem to echo in answer.  
 Yet, for all that, the sound of my own voice doesn't please me,  
 Even though sometimes the nymphs will praise to the skies my verses;  
 Nay, when I think what our shepherd has wrought and his alien  
 comrade

I am inflamed and return with spirit afire to the hilltops.  
 Thus do I go back and forth, in the hope that perchance the Muses,  
 Smiling may deign to dictate some sweet notes, likewise appealing  
 Both to the crags and myself and which the bright air may shine on.  
 Nor do I want for deep murmuring waters nor study nor ardour,  
 And if my way is impeded by fate or my own sluggish spirit,  
 I am resolved to die, brother. Such is the end of my labours.

MONICUS Oh, if but only you might step over this stony threshold!  
 Why do you turn aside? Can it be that you fear these squalid  
 Huts or your well guarded leisure? Don't frown; none under  
 compulsion  
 Enters our caves, nay, many are turned away disappointed.

SILVIUS Such is not really my fear. Say, rather, does it surprise you  
 That ears accustomed to song are wounded by unpleasant silence?  
 Habit, you know, when confirmed, becomes a part of our nature.

MONICUS Oh, can you not once more with me spend yet a short season,  
 Letting the noise of the world be stilled and the sound and the tumult?  
 Here, in the depths of night, you will see a shepherd tuning  
 Notes of unrivalled sweetness, such as to make you forgetful,  
 Heedless of all other matters. And surely you cannot call idle  
 Music which now can arouse you, now hold you fixed and enraptured.

SILVIUS Tell me, pray, who is this shepherd you speak of, so gifted in singing?  
 Under what skies was he born? Shepherds' songs I have heard by the  
 thousands,  
 Thousands of modes. So take care: My champions are surely peerless.

MONICUS Happily you may have heard of the mountain where two mighty rivers  
 Spring from one source alone, or where there pours forth from two  
 fountains  
 One sacred stream which from them draws its source and its names  
 and its waters?

SILVIUS This I have heard: it is said that once on the shores of that sparkling  
 River a hirsute youth laved the golden limbs of Apollo.  
 Blest were the wavelets that were, if the tale I heard is a true one,  
 Privileged to touch that immortal body. The stream, so they tell us,  
 Rolls with avenging current on through fields turned to ashes.

MONICUS That in truth is the land that bore him whose welcome notes flatter Heaven on high; you too will find it a joy if you listen.

SILVIUS Him I know well; of little Jerusalem's walls and its townsmen  
Never he wearies of telling nor ever is willing to leave them.  
Tearful he is, pouring forth from his breast unmusical groanings.  
My champions sing of great Rome and of Troy and of kings locked in combat,

Telling of love and its power, the effects of grief and of anger,  
Who governs the flood and the winds, what spirit rules the high  
heavens.

Under designs ever varied they paint for us the great brothers,  
Given by lot to share dominion of the three kingdoms.  
Sceptre in his hand, mighty Jove, with visage serene stands before us,  
Grasping his trident we see the Ruler of the vast Ocean,  
Blue as the sea is his hair; with them stands their swarthy brother  
And by his side his grim consort, while back and forth over the pitchy  
Ooze of the stream of the marshes of Tartarus wends the dark  
boatman.

Hark to the three headed hound a-baying, mark there the sisters  
Spinning as the law bids them, the harsh threads with fingers  
relentless.

Aye, and they sing of the shades of the Styx and of eternal darkness;  
Snake-headed furies they tell of and likewise of temple and forum;  
Meadows and groves they describe and celebrate arms and great  
heroes.

So they light up the whole world with their lofty verses' effulgence.

MONICUS Oh, but my master sings of the One, whom the gods He defeated  
Reverence, Who, with His nod can temper the fostering heavens,  
Moderating the air, distilling dew in abundance,  
Scattering the icy snow and out of the clouds, life-giving,  
Bringing the thirsty grasses the gentle showers they long for,  
Thundering down and shaking the atmosphere with sharp flashes,  
When He is moved giving seeds to the earth, to the stars each its  
season,

Bidding the tides of the ocean to flow and the hills to be stable.  
He has endowed us with body and soul and to each He has added  
Arts beyond number, ever increasing His first-granted bounty.  
He it is who first taught us—and daily repeats His good counsel—  
Life and death and their meaning and the heavenly way to weary.

He it is my master sings of, and do not, I pray you say 'hoarsely';  
 Rather say 'firmly', deep reaching into souls with mysterious  
 sweetness.  
 First—and with reason—acclaimed in the distant land that he springs  
 from,  
 Now he has come to your hills and your pastures. His glory,  
 far-sounding,  
 Spreads wide abroad over land bathed by Po and Tiber and Arno,  
 Even the vales of the Rhine and the Rhone and the shores that the  
 ocean  
 Borders resound to the fame and the sacred songs of our shepherd.

SILVIUS Well then, if chance permit I will listen. But now I must leave you.

MONICUS Wither, I ask you? What spur drives you hence? What care now  
 assails you?

SILVIUS Love of the Muse compels me. Fame tells of a youthful hero,  
 Favoured by heaven and born of the race of the gods and now filling  
 Meadows and fields of the African shore with report of his exploits.  
 Say, has he not, Polyphemus, by force thrust into your cavern?  
 Aye, and 'tis said that, much daring, he has also driven the lions  
 Out of the Libyan wastelands, firing their lairs with his torches.  
 He it is that all Italy hails; young and old and women and children  
 Vie in applause and cheer him from the great sea's opposite shoreline.  
 Hitherto, great though his fame, he has wanted a singer. His virtue  
 Merits a proper reward. So timidly I have been shaping  
 Verses to laud him. I'll try my skill and my voice, it may be,  
 Orpheus will second; I'll choose a modest pipe for my music.

MONICUS Go then, if you must, in safety. Have a care for the road and its hazards.

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# Monastic Solitude as Spiritual Remedy and Firewall against Reformation: Cornelius Musius's Reappraisal of the *Vita Solitaria* (1566)

*Karl A.E. Enenkel*

## Introduction

The Reformation brought about hard times for Western monasticism. The leaders of the Reformation denied the legitimacy of monasticism as an institution and as a truly Christian form of life, and the rulers of the countries and regions that took over the Reformation were eager to close monasteries and to confiscate their lands and possessions.<sup>1</sup> Luther, who had himself been an Augustinian monk, attacked monasticism in his fundamental treatise *De votis monasticis Martini Lutheri iudicium*<sup>2</sup> (*On Monastic Vows*, 1522) in which he argued that monasticism was in contradiction with the Bible, Christian liberty, the Ten Commandments, and human *ratio*, and that the monastic vows had no theological or legal value.<sup>3</sup> Luther's verdict had an enormous impact on public opinion in the Holy Roman Empire, and among other things, it led to a massive "Klosterflucht",<sup>4</sup> while Catholic writers were unable to

1 Cf. *inter alia* Frank K.S., "Mönchtum in Reformation und Gegenreformation", in idem, *Grundzüge der Geschichte des christlichen Mönchtums* (Darmstadt: 1983) 124–141, esp. 124–128.

2 Luther Martin, ed. princeps (Basel, n.pr. [i.e. Henricus Petri]: 1522), letter of dedication to Luther's father, Johann, dated 1 November 1522; modern scholarly edition in Luther Martin, *Werke, Weimarer Ausgabe*, vol. 8, 564–669; English translation by James Atkinson: Luther, "Judgment [...] on Monastic Vows" (Philadelphia, PA: 1966).

3 Cf. among others, Lohse B., *Mönchtum und Reformation: Luthers Auseinandersetzung mit dem Mönchsideal des Mittelalters* (Göttingen: 1963) and idem, *Luthers Theologie in ihrer historischen Entwicklung und in ihrem systematischen Zusammenhang* (Göttingen: 1995) 158–161.

4 Cf. e.g. Rublack H.-Ch., "Zur Rezeption von Luthers *De votis monasticis iudicium*", in Postel R. – Kopitzsch F. (eds.), *Reformation und Revolution: Beiträge zum politischen Wandel und den sozialen Kräften am Beginn der Neuzeit. Festschrift R. Wohlfeil zum 60. Geburtstag* (Stuttgart: 1989) 224–237; Dickens A.G., *Late Monasticism and the Reformation* (London: 1994).

launch effective counter-attacks in time.<sup>5</sup> The *Confessio Augustana*, the codification of Lutheran belief, which was presented at the diet of Augsburg in 1530, plainly condemned monasticism (article 27). In 1540 Calvin signed the Augsburg Confession, which meant that monasticism also was condemned by Calvinism. In the Protestant parts of the Holy Roman Empire most monasteries were closed from 1526 on,<sup>6</sup> and all of them were shut down in Scandinavia (1527–1536), England (1536–1540), and Scotland (1559–1560).<sup>7</sup> In the 1560s, monasteries came under pressure in the Low Countries too, especially during the iconoclasm (“beeldenstorm”) in August and September 1566, when many of them were pillaged. After the outbreak of the Dutch Revolt in 1572, the majority of the monasteries of the Northern Provinces were transformed into secular buildings.<sup>8</sup>

This is the historical and theological background of a substantial poem in praise of the monastic life authored by the Delft priest Cornelius Musius [Fig. 3.1]: *Solitudo sive vita solitaria laudata*.<sup>9</sup> The poem represents an interesting case, because (1) it was composed and published in a period of crisis and transition, even in the very year of Dutch iconoclasm (it appeared after the iconoclastic violence, at the end of 1566);<sup>10</sup> (2) its author was on the one hand a priest whose pastoral work was dedicated to a monastery (he cared for the souls of the tertiaryes of the St. Agatha convent in Delft [Figs. 3.2 and 3.3]), and on the other hand a Latin poet attached to humanism, from Petrarch to Erasmus, Jean Salmon Macrin, and Hadrianus Iunius;<sup>11</sup> (3) Musius drew on the

5 Cf. Springer K.-B., *Die deutschen Dominikaner in Widerstand und Anpassung während der Reformationszeit* (Berlin: 2008) 45.

6 Cf. Frank, “Mönchtum in Reformation und Gegenreformation” 126–127: ‘Landgraf Philipp von Hessen begann im Herbst 1526 mit der Aufhebung und Säkularisierung der Klöster seines Landes; die übrigen protestantisch gewordenen Länder und Reichsstädte Deutschlands folgten rasch in dieser Aktion nach’.

7 Cf. Dinzelbacher P. – Hogg, J.L. (eds.), *Kulturgeschichte der christlichen Orden* (Stuttgart: 1997) 20; Frank, “Mönchtum in Reformation und Gegenreformation” 126–127.

8 Cf. *inter alia* Parker G., *The Dutch Revolt* (London: 1977), on the Dutch iconoclasm chapter 2, and on the year 1572 chapter 3.

9 Antwerp, Christopher Plantin: 1566. The poem is henceforth quoted with its short title *Solitudo*.

10 Musius had sent a present copy of *Solitudo* to Nicolaas van der Burcht (Nicolaus Sastrus), bishop of Middelburg, who received it on 6 December 1566. See Utrecht, Rijksarchief Utrecht, *OKN, Verzamelde Stukken vikariaat Utrecht 1484–1699*, inventory no. 487; cf. Rikhof F.H.A., *Inventaris van de archivalia verzameld door apostolische vikarissen van de Hollandse Zending en katholiek gebleven kannuniken van de geseculariseerde kapittels, gedeponeerd bij het vikariaat Utrecht, 1384–1699* (Rijksarchief Utrecht: 1993), inventory no. 487.

11 Cf. the discussion below.



FIGURE 3.1 *Philips Galle after Maarten van Heemskerck, Portrait of Cornelius Musius (ca. 1604–1606). Engraving, 16.8 × 11.7 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (inv. no. RP-P-1906-2444).*  
IMAGE © RIJKSMUSEUM, AMSTERDAM.



FIGURE 3.2 *Photograph of the monastery of St. Agatha, Delft.*

IMAGE © RIJKSDIENST VOOR HET CULTUREEL ERFGOED, AMERSFORT.

groundbreaking humanist prose treatise *De vita solitaria* written by Petrarch,<sup>12</sup> but composed his work as a poem in *rhymed* verses, after the metrical formula of the *Stabat mater* or Thomas Aquinas's *Lauda Sion Salvatorem*, both of which belonged to the *Missale Romanum*. Musius, as a Neolatin poet, composed poems both in antique metres (hexameter, elegiac distich, Sapphic strophe) after the example of Horace, Virgil, and Ovid, and in mediaeval metres as well; he especially wrote Latin prayers and religious hymns;<sup>13</sup> we have, among

<sup>12</sup> For Petrarch's *De vita solitaria* cf. Enenkel K.A.E., *Francesco Petrarca's De vita solitaria, Buch 1: Kritische Textausgabe und ideengeschichtlicher Kommentar* (Leiden – Boston, MA: 1990).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *inter alia* Musius, *Sacrorum carminum sybula/ Hymni*, in *Solitudo*, fols. L2v–N2v: “Psalmus CXXVII”; “Hymnus antelucanus”; “H. lucanus”; “H. submeridianus”; “H. meridianus”; “H. pomeridianus”; “H. vespertinus”; “H. nocturnus”; “Fugiendum improborum hominum consortium”; “Ad Christum passum confessio”; “Ad Christum crucifixum lachrymae”; “Ad eundem culpae deprecatio”; “Ad Christum redemptorem”; “Ad Christum resurgentem”; “Ad Virginem Matrem sub sacrosanctam communionem supplicatio pro N.”; “Ad eandem Virginem Matrem a sacrosancta communione gratiarum actio, pro eodem”;



FIGURE 3.3 Coenraet Decker (engraver), “The Convent of St. Agatha and the Prinsenhof in Delft”, in Dirck van Bleyswijk, Beschryvinge der stadt Delft (Delft, Arnold Bon: 1667). Engraving, 18 × 27.1 cm. Delft, University of Technology (TR 536422).

IMAGE © UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, DELFT.

other things, his personal manuscript prayer book with hymns and prayers authored by him, now in the University Library of Leiden.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, Musius composed another extended religious poem on a topic related to *Solitudo*, titled *Verus monachus*, which is preserved in Musius’s autograph and in a later printed version.<sup>15</sup> In the first lines of the *Verus monachus* Musius refers to the success of *Solitudo*, which stimulated him to write another poem in the same

Masurier François Martial – Musius Cornelius, *Liber victoriae continens psalterium afflictorum ad arcendos hostes, vocem Domini afflictis respondentem, Psalterium in tribulacione vicentium [...] (Lyon, Antoine Tardif: 1584).*

<sup>14</sup> Leiden University Library, MS. 3333. Its text is printed in: *Horae precationum regiarum a Guglielmo II Caesare Romano ac Hollandiae comite religiose olim recitatae. Item preces horariae et silvula sacrarum precum D. Cornelii Musii Delphi, illustris saeculi Theologi, Poetae ac Martyris* (Lyon, Joannes Stratus: 1583) 45–174. See Bouwman A.Th., “The Prayer Book of Cornelius Musius”, *Quaerendo* 33 (2003) 30–53.

<sup>15</sup> The autograph in Utrecht, Archief Utrecht, OKN, *Verzamelde Stukken vikariaat Utrecht 1484–1699*, inventory no. 566. Cf. Rikhof, *Inventaris*, inventory no. 566. Printed in Musius, *Horae precationum [...] 232–267.*



FIGURE 3.4 *Photograph of the entrance port of the Certosa di Pisa with the inscription 'O beata solitudo/ O sola beatitudo'.*

IMAGE © GHOULSGUIDES.COM.

vein.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, in a marked difference from the entirely negative judgements of twentieth-century scholars,<sup>17</sup> the poem *Solitudo* was also favourably received in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Its refrain, 'O beata solitudo! O sola beatitudo!', even gained the status of an adage or proverbial wisdom. The Carthusian order adopted it as a motto, and it served as an inscription in hermitages—for example, on the entrance port of de Certosa di Pisa [Fig. 3.4].<sup>18</sup> Even in the nineteenth century Paul Heyse used Musius's phrase 'O beata solitudo! O sola beatitudo!' as the title and refrain of a poem,<sup>19</sup> and similarly other poets of the nineteenth century were inspired by it and quoted it.

<sup>16</sup> *Verus monachus*, autograph Utrecht, Archief Utrecht, *OKN*, *Verzamelde Stukken vikari-aat Utrecht 1484–1699*, inventory no. 566, fol. 3r: 'Si Laudata Solitudo/ Eiusque beatitudo/ Evulgata placuit, // [...] (emphasis mine) 'If the praise of Solitude and its blessings has pleased the audience [...] ' he composes now the Verus Monachus. 'Laudata Solitudo' refers directly to the title of the poem *Solitudo sive vita solitaria laudata*.

<sup>17</sup> See below.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Nissen P., "Topographies of Solitude: Places of Silence in Early Carthusian Spirituality", in Blommestijn H. et al. (eds.), *Seeing the Seeker: Explorations in the Discipline of Spirituality* (Leuven – Paris: 2008) 201–213.

<sup>19</sup> "Beata solitudo": 'In diesen linden Lüften/ Wie ruht es sich so gut!/ Umhaucht von leisen Düften/ Der jungen Veilchenbrut!/ Kein Laut der tiefe dringet/ Hier störend zu mir hin,/ Und tröstlich immer klinget/ Der Spruch mir durch den Sinn: O beata Solitudo/

The author of *Solitudo* himself gained a special status only a few years later: that of an early modern martyr. In 1572, Musius was cruelly tortured and murdered by the henchmen of the Sea Beggar Willem van der Marck, Lord of Lumey;<sup>20</sup> in the same year “his” monastery had been transformed into one of the centres of power of the Dutch Revolution, the “Prinsenhof”, which served as residence to the Prince of Orange. Catholic authors, such as Pieter Opmeer (1526–1595, *Historia Martyrum Batavicorum*),<sup>21</sup> Lucas Opmeer (son of the former, *Vita D. Cornelii Musii, Delphi Poetae, Theologi ac Martyris celeberrimi*),<sup>22</sup> and Richard Verstegen or Rowlands (ca. 1548–1640, *Theatrum crudelitatis haereticorum nostri temporis*),<sup>23</sup> hailed Musius as a martyr, although he was never officially acknowledged as such by the Holy See. “Musius’s” monastery of St. Agatha became part of Dutch national memory, although not as “the place of Musius” but as the spot where the founding father of the modern Netherlands, William the Silent, was assassinated. Musius nevertheless gained the status of a major icon of Dutch Catholicism, and even in the twentieth century monographs were dedicated to him.<sup>24</sup> The most

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O sola beatitudo.// [...] Ich habe lang mein Leben/ Geschäftig durchgestürmt,/ Gar oft in Furcht und Beben,/ Wenn Wolken sich getürmt./ Nun da ich hier geschieden/ Vom Weltgetümmel bin,/ Sing ich in sel'gem Frieden/ Mein Sprüchlein vor mich hin:/ O beata Solitudo/ O sola beatitudo'. Cf. Heyse P., *Gesammelte Werke*, series 1, vol. 5 (Stuttgart: 1924) 434–435.

<sup>20</sup> For Lumey cf. Oosterhuis T., *Lumey, de vossestaart, Admiraal van de Geuzen* (Amsterdam: 1990), esp. 175–179.

<sup>21</sup> *Historia Martyrum Batavicorum sive defectionis a fide maiorum Hollandiae initia* (Cologne, Peter Henning – Bernhard Walter: 1625).

<sup>22</sup> In Musius, *Horae precationum* [...] 35–39.

<sup>23</sup> Antwerp, Adrianus Hubertus: 1587 (further editions of the Latin work: 1588, 1592, 1603); French translation *Theatre de cruautez des hereticques de nostre temps* (Antwerp, Adrianus Hubertus: 1587; iterated in 1588, 1592, and 1607). Cf. Freedberg D., “The Representation of Martyrdoms during the Early Counter-Reformation in Antwerp”, *The Burlington Magazine* (1976) 132–138; Petti A.G., “Richard Verstegan and Catholic Martyrologies of the Later Elizabethan Period”, *Recusant History* 5 (1959) 64–90; Arblaster P., *Antwerp and the World: Richard Verstegan and the International Culture of Catholic Reformation* (Leuven: 2004); Rombauts E., *Richard Verstegen, een polemist der Contra-Reformatie* (Brussels: 1933).

<sup>24</sup> Dijk A. van, *Cornelius Musius: Een Delftse martelaar van 1572* (Utrecht [et al.]: 1947) (as part of the series *Batavia sacra*); Noordeloos P., *Cornelius Musius (Mr Cornelius Muys): Pater van Sint Agatha te Delft. Humanist, priester, martelaar* (Utrecht – Antwerp: 1955); Delft E. van, *Meester Cornelius Muys: De laatste pater van het St. Agatha-convent te Delft* ('s-Hertogenbosch: 1961).

important one, by P. Noordeloos, which appeared in a second edition in 1965,<sup>25</sup> has the merit of bringing many hitherto unknown facts to light, but the disadvantage was that it was conceived as a eulogy in praise of a Catholic hero.

### Musius and Humanism

Musius was attached to humanism in many ways.<sup>26</sup> From his youth onward, especially during his education at the humanist *Collegium trilingue* in Louvain (1517), he greatly admired Erasmus. After Erasmus's death Musius composed poems of mourning.<sup>27</sup> In these poems he hails Erasmus as the greatest scholar of his time, and he praises his 'noble mind', 'illustrious virtue', and worldwide fame,<sup>28</sup> as well as the fact that he authored 'a thousand volumes'<sup>29</sup> and mastered a kind of 'divine art' of writing.<sup>30</sup> Although in the *Tumuli* there are no traces of an "Erasmian" humanism in a more narrow sense (as can be found in the works of, for example, Beatus Rhenanus, Eobanus Hessus, Theodor Bibliander, and Hadrianus Junius),<sup>31</sup> Erasmus was of paramount importance for Musius's development as a writer. As Musius states in his autobiography,<sup>32</sup> it was Erasmus who opened his eyes:

<sup>25</sup> Cornelis Musius [Mr Cornelis Muys]: *Pater van Sint Agatha te Delft, Humanist, Priester, Martelaar* (Utrecht – Antwerp: 1965).

<sup>26</sup> For Musius as an imitator of the Italian humanists Francis Petrarch and Lombardo della Seta cf. Enenkel K.A.E., "Ein Delfter Priester als Imitator italienischer Humanisten: Cornelius Musius, Lombardo della Seta und Francesco Petrarca", *Dutch Review for Church History* 72, 1 (1992) 13–36.

<sup>27</sup> *Tumulorum D. Erasmi Roterodami libellus* (Louvain, Rutger Rescius: 1536), a very small booklet in 4o, one quaternion only. I consulted the copy of Utrecht, Rijksarchief Utrecht, *OKN, Verzamelde Stukken vikariaat Utrecht 1484–1699*, inventory no. 565. Cf. Noordeloos, *Cornelis Musius* 105–109.

<sup>28</sup> *Tumulorum D. Erasmi Roterodami libellus*, fol. Aiiiv: 'Nobilis ingenio et virtute illustris Erasmus, / Ille usque a Tanai notus ad usque fretum'.

<sup>29</sup> Ibidem, fol. <AIii>r: 'Qui (sc. Erasmus) mundum implevi mille voluminibus'—'I (i.e. Erasmus) who gave to the world a thousand volumes'. Although Erasmus published a great number of works, it is clear that Musius is applying the rhetorical figure of *hyperbole*.

<sup>30</sup> Ibidem, fol. <AIii>r: 'Ille [...] quot divina scripserit arte libros!'

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Enenkel K.A.E. (ed.), *The Reception of Erasmus in the Early Modern Period*, Intersections 30 (Leiden – Boston, MA: 2013), esp. idem, "Manifold Reader Responses: The Reception of Erasmus in Early Modern Europe" 1–21.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. below.

Nescio quas nugas et frivola segnis amabam;/  
 Ingenium ut taceam  
 Quam fuit exiguum quodque omnia tempore in illo/  
 Barbariesque mera  
 Et plusquam Gothicis fuerant plenissima monstria./  
 Plena hodieque forent,  
 Si non praesidium studiorum, magnus Erasmus,/br/>
 Talia monstra stilo  
 Confecisset et insigni procul urbe fugasset.<sup>33</sup>

[At this time, i.e. during Musius's first years in Louvain] I was lazy and loved I don't know what kinds of stupid things; to remain silent about how insignificant my intellect was and about the fact that everything I wrote in those days, was nothing but Barbarianism and abounded with linguistic monsters that were worse than Gothic. And it would be like this still today, if the great Erasmus, the godfather of intellectual pursuits, had not killed these monsters and thrown them out of town with his outstanding pen.

Musius was not only grateful to Erasmus for showing him the light, but he was also convinced that the positive impact Erasmus had on his contemporaries was irreversible, and that his death could not change anything in this respect. 'Why do you mourn?' Musius asked his friend, the printer Jan Lodewijk van Tielt, 'Do you really believe that we have lost Erasmus, of whom—as you see—so many monuments have remained?'<sup>34</sup> With 'monuments' Musius meant Erasmus's works, such as the *Adagia*, the *Apophthegmata*, his edition of the Church Fathers, and his *Encomium stultitiae* (*Praise of Folly*). Some twenty-five years later, Musius still admired the *Adagia* and composed a poem in praise of them.<sup>35</sup>

Moreover, Musius seems to have had a personal and deep affection for Erasmus, in which religious aspects probably played a certain role. This refers

33 Musius, *De temporum fugacitate et sacrorum poematum immortalitate ode* (Pitou, brothers Marnef: 1536), published in Noordeloos, *Cornelis Musius* 284–285. The poem is written in the first Archilocean strophe.

34 *Tumulorum D. Erasmi Roterodami libellus*, fol. <Aiiv>v: 'Quid, Ludovice, doles? Ereptum credis Erasmum,/ Esse vides cuius tot monumenta super'.

35 Published in Sartorius's edition and translation into Dutch: Erasmus, *Adagiorum chiliades tres, quae Joannes Sartorius in Batavicum sermonem proprie ac eleganter convertit et brevi ac perspicua interpretatione illustravit* (Antwerp, Joannes Locus: 1561), as an introductory poem, and in its full length also in Walvis Ignatius, *Beschrijving der stad Gouda* [...] (Gouda, Johannes and Andries Endenburg: 1713) 278. Cf. Noordeloos, *Cornelis Musius* 153.

to the fact that Erasmus had been an Augustinian monk (at Steyn, close to Gouda), and he too composed a work in praise of the monastic life (*De contemptu mundi*).<sup>36</sup> Musius adorned his room at St. Agatha with a painting made by Erasmus in the days when he had been a monk at the Steyn convent, probably a small altarpiece with a crucifixion. Musius composed an epigram, which was written in golden letters on the painting's frame: 'Haec Desiderius (ne spernas) pinxit Erasmus/ Olim Steinaceo quando latebat agro'.<sup>37</sup> In other poems Musius clearly identified himself with Erasmus. For example, Musius emphasised that he shared with Erasmus his 'fatherland' ('patria'),<sup>38</sup> by which he means either the province of Holland<sup>39</sup> or the Low Countries in a broader sense.<sup>40</sup>

Most importantly, Musius presented himself as a humanist writer in a poet's autobiography, published in 1536 with the title *De temporum fugacitate et sacrorum poematum immortalitate ode* (*On the Fugacity of Time and the Immortality of Sacred Poems*). Musius's autobiography is a statement: in imitation of Ovid's famous autobiography, the elegy to posterity (*Tristia* IV, 10),<sup>41</sup> Horace's *Ode* IV, 7, and probably also Eobanus Hessus's love letter to Lady Posterity (in the *Heroides Christianae*),<sup>42</sup> Musius introduces himself to the readers as a humanist poet. As I have shown in my study on humanist autobiography, the central aim of this type of autobiographical poem was for the writer to present himself as a legitimate author; such authors' verse autobiographies functioned as a kind of passport to the Republic of Letters.<sup>43</sup> Musius's verse autobiography is at once a

36 Cf. the critical edition in *Opera omnia Desiderii Erasmus* (ASD) V, 1, ed. S. Dresden (Amsterdam: 1977).

37 'Desiderius Erasmus painted this (do not vilipend it)/ Long ago when he lived secretly in the countryside of Stein'. The poem is transmitted in Musius, *Horae precationum* 72. For the poem cf. also Noordeloos, *Cornelis Musius* 109.

38 *Tumulorum D. Erasmi Roterodami libellus*, fol. Aii: 'communis patria'.

39 Ibidem, fol. <Aiiii>r: 'Ille ego (sc. Erasmus) in Hollandis natus nec paenitet oris [...]— 'This is me (Erasmus) who was born in the region of Holland, and I am not ashamed of it [...]'.

40 Ibidem, fol. Aiiiv: 'Siste gradus hospes, *Belga* hic requiescit Erasmus'.

41 Cf. Enenkel K.A.E., "Rhetorische Strategien und Interpretation von Ovid, *Tristia* IV, 10", in Orban A.P. – Poel M.G.M. van der (eds.), *Ad Litteras: Latin Studies in Honour of J.H. Brouwers* (Nijmegen: 2001) 113–130, with more scholarly literature.

42 Cf. Enenkel K.A.E., "Autobiographisches Ethos und Ovid-Überbietung: Die Dichter-autobiographie des Eobanus Hessus", *Neulateinisches Jahrbuch* 2 (2000) 25–38, and idem, "Autobiographie als Heroinenbrief: Eobanus Hessus' Liebesbrief an die Nachwelt (1514)", in idem, *Die Erfindung des Menschen. Die Autobiographik des frühneuzeitlichen Humanismus von Petrarca bis Lipsius* (Berlin – New York, NY: 2008) 429–449.

43 Enenkel, *Die Erfindung des Menschen* 443–446.

claim and a master proof, a poetic *tour de force* in which he demonstrates that he has fully mastered a difficult Horatian metre (the first Archilochean strophe) and that he is able to combine the topic of Horace's ode (the fugacity of time) with the autobiographic content of Ovid's elegy.<sup>44</sup> In his autobiography, Musius presents himself as a lover of the Muses. Without doubt the humanist's name he chose was yet another expression of this claim. In this respect, it was a nice coincidence that he was born in the town of Delft: in Latin, Musius calls it 'Delphi', and in this way identifies it with the Greek Delphi (Delphoi)<sup>45</sup> on the south-western slope of Mount Parnassus, where the famous sanctuary of Apollo and the Muses was situated. On the title page of *Solitudo* the poet presents himself as Cornelius Musius of Delphi; also, he dedicates the work to the/his Muse ("Ad Musam encomii dedicatio").<sup>46</sup> Like Ovid in his autobiography, Musius was convinced that with good Latin poetry he would gain immortality, and he regarded poetry as his personal mission. He aimed at 'preparing something worthwhile for heavenly residence', i.e. 'singing an eternal poem that cannot be harmed by time and envious old age'.<sup>47</sup> And he felt himself to be a lofty poet ('vates'), such as Virgil and Horace.<sup>48</sup>

Another icon of Musius as a humanist was the poet Jean Salmon Macrin (1490–1557), the "French Horace".<sup>49</sup> In his autobiography Musius says that he wanted to compose verses that would please Macrin, 'the greatest glory of

44 Horace used the first Archilochean strophe only once, in *Carmen* IV, 7. In fact, because of the metre Musius's readers were supposed to already understand that the author imitated *Carmen* IV, 7. Its content is only a melancholic meditation on the fugacity of time; Horace does not construct an autobiography with a *curriculum vitae*.

45 'Delphi' was the Latin form of the Greek 'Delphoi'.

46 *Solitudo*, fol. <A4>r.

47 Cf. Musius's autobiography, in Noordeloos, *Cornelis Musius* 286.

48 *Ibidem* 287. In the last line of his autobiography Musius states: 'Carmina sacra tamen/ Post cineres Vatem postque ultima fata sequuntur/ Et sine fine manent'—'But sacred songs accompany/ the sacred poet even after his death and his last hour,/ and remain in eternity'.

49 For Macrin cf. Schumann M.-F., *Salmon Macrin und sein Werk unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der "carmina ad Gelonidem" von 1528 und 1530* (Münster: 2009); for Macrin's works until 1536 cf. the editions by eadem: *Salmon Macrins Gedichtsammlungen von 1528 bis 1534. Edition mit Wortindex* (Münster: 2011) and *Salmon Macrins Gedichtsammlungen von 1537. Edition mit Wortindex* (Münster: 2012). For Macrin as emulator of Horace cf. Ludwig W., "Horazrezeption in der Renaissance oder die Renaissance des Horaz", in Reverdin O. – Grange B. (eds.), *Horace—L'œuvre et les imitations—Un siècle d'interprétation*, Entretiens sur l'Antiquité classique 39 (Geneva: 1992/1993) 305–371.

Latin lyric poetry'.<sup>50</sup> Other literary judges that mattered for him were Antoine Ardillon (1513–1540), abbot of the monastery Fontaine-Le-Comte and an admirer of Rabelais and of Macrin,<sup>51</sup> and Julian d'Havrech (d'Havré or Julianus Aurelius), a young jurist and humanist scholar who also lived in Poitiers and prepared a manual on ancient mythology<sup>52</sup> and a commentary on the first two *Satires* of Horace.<sup>53</sup> Among them was certainly Janus Secundus, who was then probably the most famous Latin poet of the Low Countries. Musius personally befriended him in 1536, when Secundus stayed for a couple of weeks at Musius's house in Poitiers.<sup>54</sup> Later, Musius cherished contacts with humanists, including the schoolmaster Henricus Iunius from Gouda,<sup>55</sup> Johannes Sartorius, and Hadrianus Iunius, the last of these being the most important Dutch humanist after Erasmus and one of the authors of a famous emblem book.<sup>56</sup> Iunius dedicated two of his emblems to Musius.<sup>57</sup> Hadrianus Iunius is especially relevant for *Solitudo*, since Musius asked him to correct the work and rewarded it with a medal portrait of Virgil.<sup>58</sup> But Musius was acquainted with the works of Italian humanists as well, such as Pontano, Poliziano, and Petrarch. He published, among other things, a verse dialogue as a kind of appendix to *Solitudo*, with the title "Urbani et solitarii colloquium". In a previous study I have shown that Musius imitated in this poem a prose dialogue composed by the Paduan

50 Cf. Noordeloos, *Cornelis Musius* 286: 'Et quod Macrinus, plectri lyraeque Latinae,/ Gloria prima, probet'.

51 Cf. *ibidem* 80–82.

52 For Julien d'Havrech and his scholarly work cf. Enenkel K.A.E., "The Making of 16th Century Mythography: Giraldi's *Syntagma de Musis* (1507, 1511, and 1539), *De deis gentium historia* (ca. 1500–1548) and Julien de Havrech's *De cognominibus deorum gentilium* (1541)", *Humanistica Lovaniensia* 51 (2002) 9–53, esp. 32–53; and *Memoires pour servir a l'histoire littéraire des dix-sept provinces des Pays-Bas* [...] (Louvain, Louvain University Press: 1768), vol. 12, 363–365. In his autobiography Musius calls him 'Havretus' (cf. text in Noordeloos, *Cornelis Musius* 286).

53 *Commentarius et paraphrasis in duas primas Horatii Satyras* (Louvain, Antonius Goymus: 1541).

54 Cf. Noordeloos, *Cornelis Musius* 94–97.

55 Walvis, *Beschrijving der stad Gouda* 278.

56 For Iunius's emblem book cf. Enenkel K.A.E., "Authorization—Lusus Emblematum: The Function of Junius' Emblem Commentary and Early Commentaries on Alciato's Emblematum libellus", in Miert D. van (ed.), *The Kaleidoscopic Scholarship of Hadrianus Junius (1511–1575)* (Leiden – Boston, MA) 260–289.

57 *Emblemata* (Antwerp, Christopher Plantin: 1564), nos. 22 and 23. Cf. Noordeloos, *Cornelis Musius* 153.

58 Cf. Noordeloos, *Cornelis Musius* 153–154.

humanist Lombardo della Seta (Lombardus a Serico), a friend of Petrarch.<sup>59</sup> Close reading has brought to light that Musius used della Seta's work through its description in Francis Petrarch's prose letter *Senilium rerum* (*Letters of Old Age*) xv, 3.<sup>60</sup> Musius owned the edition of Petrarch's *Opera omnia* issued by Henricus Petri in 1554.<sup>61</sup> Petrarch's treatise *De vita solitaria* was printed there in the first volume.<sup>62</sup>

### **Musius's *Solitudo sive vita solitaria laudata***

The poem *Solitudo sive vita solitaria laudata* (1566) has not been properly studied so far, and up to now we do not know exactly its content, argument, context, and meaning. While Ellinger has already drawn attention to the poem,<sup>63</sup> he remained very vague about its contents; he interpreted the work as sign of Musius's backwardness with respect to historical consciousness and humanist poetics.<sup>64</sup> Neither judgement is convincing or helpful. The information Noordeloos gives about *Solitudo* is likewise poor, partly because it is not precise enough, and partly because it is misleading. Noordeloos seems to regard the poem as a kind of blueprint for Musius's work as a pastor of the female monastery of St. Agatha<sup>65</sup> and suggests that *Solitudo* contains the arguments Musius

59 Enenkel, "Ein Delfter Priester".

60 Petrarch, *Opera omnia* (Basel, Henricus Petri: 1554), vol. 2, 1031–1036; Enenkel, "Ein Delfter Priester" 18–21.

61 Cf. Enenkel, "Ein Delfter Priester" 20–21; this appears from the inventory of Musius's possessions from 1573. Cf. Lommel A. van, S.J., "Archievstukken betrekkelijk de nalatenschap van Cornelis Musius", *Dietsche Warande* 1 (1876) 591. The inventory lists only the second volume. However, because the second volume was not sold separately, Musius probably owned the first volume as well. But also without clear ownership references it appears from the text of the poem *Solitudo* that he had access to Petrarch's *De vita solitaria* and that he used it, even on the micro-level of textual transmission. For this aspect, see below.

62 Petrarch, *Opera omnia*, vol. 1, 256–331.

63 Cf. Ellinger G., *Die Geschichte der neulateinischen Lyrik in den Niederlanden vom Ausgang des fünfzehnten bis zum Beginn des siebzehnten Jahrhunderts* (Berlin – Leipzig: 1933) 94.

64 Ibidem: 'So legt er [sc. Musius] denn die Vorzüge der mönchischen Weltflucht nach den verschiedensten Seiten dar [...].—'However, he says: "Als Stimme eines mit seinem Stande wohlzufriedenen, den Neuerungen seiner andersgerichteten Zeit abholden Ordensmannes verdient das Gedicht gekannt zu werden; poetische Vorzüge sind ihm nicht nachzurüthmen".

65 Noordeloos, *Cornelis Musius* 123: 'Voor de beoordeling van de geest, die Musius in het bestuur van het convent bezieldde, mogen we een beroep doen op zijn Lof de Eenzaamheid.

used in order to persuade 'young girls' to enter the monastery.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, Noordeloos says that Musius argued in *Solitudo* that the true *vita solitaria* is not monastic life as such but 'inner solitude',<sup>67</sup> but he also maintains that Musius gave a description of the various monastic orders, their rules, prayers, spiritual exercises, and conversations,<sup>68</sup> without explaining what sense such a contradictory approach would have made. Noordeloos does not analyse the sources of *Solitudo*, but only suggests that it had nothing in common with Petrarch's *De vita solitaria*.<sup>69</sup>

Unfortunately, none of these characterisations is correct. First of all, the poem was clearly not written for nuns or young girls, but for a male audience. The fact that Musius has primarily directed his work toward males is already apparent from the male grammatical forms: for example, in the refrain, which is repeated after every thirty-six verses (forty-one times in total), Musius blesses the adherents of the solitary life in male forms: 'Quam beati candidati,/ Qui ad te [i.e. solitudinem] volant alati,/ Porro a mundicolis!'<sup>70</sup> Among other things, he states that 'here', in the 'solitudo' (by which he mostly visualises a coenobitic monastery) 'One brother supports the other,/ One brother lifts up the other' ('Frater hic fratrem supportat/ Frater fratrem sublevat').<sup>71</sup> In the introductory poem "Ad Musam encomii dedicatio", Musius asks his Muse to bring the booklet to 'religious men (*religiosi viri*) [...] among all monastic orders'.<sup>72</sup> 'Religiosi' was a synonym for 'monks'. In a passage in which he lists the moral qualities of monks, Musius addresses men: 'Viri hic religiosi/ Non sunt superstitionis' ('Here [i.e. in the monastery] there are religious men,/ no superstitious men'); these men are not vainglorious ('gloriosi'), like the soldier Thraso in Terence's play *Eunuchus*, nor are they ambitious, arrogant ('fastuosi', 'tumidi'), lazy ('putidi'), and so on.<sup>73</sup> They are

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Wij menen, dat dit geoorloofd is, aangezien in Musius' leven nergens enige tegenspraak valt te ontdekken tussen zijn woorden en daaden'.

66 Ibidem: 'Aan zijn *Encomium Solitudinis* dan kunnen wij ontlenen, hoe Musius aan de meisjes, die het verlangen koesterden om in het klooster te treden heeft voorgehouden, welke een hoge waarde het kloosterleven heeft'.

67 Ibidem 182: 'De ware afzondering bestaat in de afzondering van de geest'.

68 Ibidem 183.

69 Ibidem 182, note 2.

70 (Emphasis mine) 'How blessed are the candidates who hurry up to fly to you, in a great distance from the inhabitants of the World (Mundus)'.

71 *Solitudo*, fol. C2v.

72 Ibidem, fol. A4r: '(Musa) Vade ad religiosos,/ Viros Dei studiosos,/ Cuiuscunque ordinis [...]'.

73 Ibidem, fol. D1r.

not eager to become bishops, abbots, or primates—offices, as is generally known, that only men can access.<sup>74</sup>

Last but not least, it is not correct to regard *Solitudo* as a description of the various monastic orders, their rules, prayers, spiritual exercises, and so on. On the contrary, Musius emphatically declares that whether or not there were different monastic orders with various habits was completely irrelevant to his topic. Clothes, he says, do not matter; what really counts is the fact that *all monks* have the same ideal and pursue the *same single goal*.<sup>75</sup>

It is, of course, not totally absurd to suppose that *Solitudo* may have an autobiographical background. Nevertheless, one should be careful with this assumption, and look first at the parameters that are relevant for the work. Above all it is important to register that the relevant genre of the work is the *encomium*, i.e. rhetorical and literary praise. The author Musius himself already announces this rhetorical figuration on the title page, calling himself an 'Encomiastes' and stating that the monastic life will be 'praised' ('laudata') in the following work. The genre of *encomium* or *laudatio* implies that an author is not bound to the limits of his personal experience or autobiographical facts. Rather, he may use all his rhetorical and literary skills to produce impressive arguments of praise; and he is not expected to present his thoughts in a neutral or all too realistic way—on the contrary: in the genre of *encomium* it was not done to highlight negative aspects. An *encomiastes* may sympathise with or even have a close affinity with his topic, but this is not a necessary point of departure. Interestingly, Musius mentions Erasmus's *Praise of Folly* as one of his literary forerunners.<sup>76</sup> It does not require proof that in his personal life Erasmus was not an adherent of Folly, and that he rather used the literary fiction of Folly in order to get access to a wide range of rhetorical figures, unusual images, thoughts, and literary devices. Besides, *laudatio* also can have other poetic implications that clearly transcend autobiographical description—we will come back to this aspect in the last section. Furthermore, one must not forget that—in the proper terms of the Catholic Church—Musius was not a monk but a priest, and he was well aware of that. And in *Solitudo*, he clearly talks about monks (or hermits), but not about priests.

What are the characteristics of the poem *Solitudo*, and in what context should one understand them? First of all, it is striking that Musius's *Solitudo*

74 Ibidem: 'Pedum tamen non captatur,/ Nec mitra desideratur./ Non est hic ambitio'.

75 Ibidem, fol. F3v.

76 Ibidem, fol. B<1>r: 'Est stultitiam exculto/ Salse qui et satis multo/ Extulit eloquio [i.e. Erasmus]'.—'There exists also an author who praises Folly in a refined and extended essay'.

has some important basic features in common with Petrarch's *De vita solitaria*: for example, (1) Musius's poem also focuses on the 'solitude of place' (*solitudo loci*) or solitary space; (2) a considerable part of the work deals not with the *solitarii* but with their opposite, people who live in the *mundus*—Petrarch called them 'occupati', Musius 'mundani' or 'mundicolae';<sup>77</sup> (3) both works are largely composed as a defence against intellectual enemies who denied the legitimacy of the *vita solitaria*; (4) both works emphasise the *solitudo literata*, i.e. scholarship and learning;<sup>78</sup> and (5) both works present a catalogue of historical *exempla* of representatives of the solitary life, including the desert fathers and the protagonists of the Old Testament.<sup>79</sup>

This is not to maintain that *Solitudo* is just a verse version of *De vita solitaria*. It was written in a different historical context and with different goals in mind. For example, it was not Musius's aim to author a blueprint for a new humanist, 'free' lifestyle for modern intellectuals, as Petrarch did. In a marked difference, Musius defined the *solitarius* as an institutionalised monk. He talks about the 'Monachorum institutum' or 'Monasticum institutum', 'vita monastica',<sup>80</sup> 'vita monachica',<sup>81</sup> 'Monachismus',<sup>82</sup> and 'coenobitae'.<sup>83</sup> He infers that the inhabitants of the *solitudo* belong to a monastic order ('ordo'), that they organise their life according to a certain monastic 'rule' ('regula'), and that they obey a 'pater' or 'abbot'.<sup>84</sup> Although Petrarch has excluded institutional aspects, it appears that Musius, the *encomiastes* of institutional monasticism, has heavily drawn from *De vita solitaria*. This is in itself not a rare exception. Petrarch's treatise was extremely successful in its reception by the monastic orders of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, as I have argued elsewhere.<sup>85</sup>

77 For example, 'mundicolae' appears in the refrain, which is repeated forty-one times: 'Quam beati candidati,/ Quid ad te volant alati/ Porro a *mundicolis!*' (emphasis mine).

78 *Ibidem*, fol. C<1>r.

79 The second book of Petrarch's *De vita solitaria* is entirely dedicated to these historical examples, from Adam to ca. 1300. For Musius, cf. *Solitudo*, fols. H<1>v–I<1>r.

80 *Solitudo*, fol. C3r; cf. also the title of Musius's introductory poem, fol. A3r: '[...] MONASTICAE VITAE LAUDATAE RATIO'.

81 *Ibidem*, fol. C3v.

82 *Ibidem*, fol. A3r.

83 *Ibidem*, fol. <A4>r.

84 *Ibidem*, fol. C<1>v: '[...] hic [i.e. in the monastery] [...] / Rigor ordinis servatur/ Cum perseverantia:// Regulae disciplinariis,/ Disciplinae regularis/ Viget observantia.// Quicquid iubet venerandus/ Atque pater observandus,/ Fit cum reverentia'.

85 Enenkel K., "Die monastische Petrarca-Rezeption: Zur Autorisierung über den Widmungsempfänger und zu anderen Bedingungen des Erfolgs von *De vita solitaria* in spätmittelalterlichen Klöstern", *Neulateinisches Jahrbuch* 14 (2012) 27–51.

### The Contagiousness of Towns

In the late Middle Ages, intellectual life largely took place in urban centres; after the emergence of the mendicant orders and the rise of the universities in the thirteenth century, this was also true for the new monasticism. Petrarch, however, insisted in *De vita solitaria* on a harsh divide between *vita activa*, which he called *vita occupata* and defined as urban life, and *vita contemplativa*, which he located outside of towns and called *vita solitaria*. In his view, the one excluded the other, and his treatise is full of attacks against life in towns, townspeople, and town architecture. For him, the prime example of a morally reprehensible town was Avignon, the place of the Holy See in the fourteenth century, which he baptised the modern Babylon.<sup>86</sup> Although for Musius the general context was different, he took over Petrarch's negative moral judgement of towns. As Petrarch did, Musius maintained that a stay in towns would cause the moral and spiritual ruin of the individual; like Petrarch, Musius supposed that the bad manners of the townspeople were contagious, like epidemic illnesses. Characteristically, at the end of *Solitudo* he beseeches the reader to leave the towns and to withdraw into solitude, which he specifies as 'safe hiding places':

Tu in medio luporai [...] habitans/  
Non times contagium?//

Fuge, ne inficiaris,/br/>Fuge, ne his involvaris,/br/>Tutas intra latebras.//br/>Fuge pestes animarum,/br/>Ne aeternas furiarum/  
Incidas in tenebras.// [...]

Nil est, cur te ita turbes./br/>Felix est, qui fugit urbes,/br/>Fuge, et beaberis.//br/>Fuge, tace et quiesce,/br/>Carnis remorarum compesce./br/>*In monte salvaberis.*//

86 For this aspect, cf. my other contribution in this volume, on Petrarch's construction of the sacred place in *De vita solitaria* and other writings.

In turba stare illaesum/  
 Et tibi videre Iesum/  
 valde est difficile.//  
 Sed *in sycomoro* vere/  
 Ipsum spiritu *videre*/  
 Admodum est facile.// [...].<sup>87</sup>

You who are living among the wolves; and are really not afraid of contagion?// Escape, so that you do not get infected; escape to safe hiding places, so that you do not get involved in such things.// Escape from the contagious illnesses of the souls to make sure that you do not fall into the dark night of fury.// [...] There is no reason to get bewildered to such an extent. Happy is the man who escapes from the towns. Escape, and you will be blessed.// Escape, be silent and quiet. Tame the temptation of the flesh. *On the mountaintop you will find salvation.*// It is very difficult for you to stand amidst the crowd without getting harmed, and see Jesus.// But on a sycamore [i.e. a fig tree] it is very easy to see him spiritually.

Whereas Musius's exhortation seems to be perfectly in line with Petrarch's anti-urban attitude, it is noteworthy, however, that the spectrum of urban enemies differs. Petrarch directed his negative judgement toward a very broad spectrum of townspeople, including not only intellectuals, such as lawyers, mendicant preachers, and university professors, but also merchants, patricians, rich men, butchers, hucksters, grocers, prostitutes, and in fact all kinds of town dwellers. Musius, on the other hand, apparently had few problems with the majority of Petrarch's enemies: he directs his attacks in the first place against the adherents of Reformation.<sup>88</sup> He is afraid that town dwellers become infected with the bad thoughts, morals, and behaviour of the *reformed* people. He holds that if man hides himself outside the towns, in monasteries and hermitages, he is not endangered by these contagions. Accordingly, he thought that it was almost impossible to reach spiritual perfection in an urban context. He states:

Rara avis est in urbe/  
 (Ne mendaci crede turbae)/  
 Vir absolutissimus.//  
 Sed perfectus in deserto/

87 *Solitudo*, fols. K3v–<K4>v.

88 *Ibidem*, fols. K3r–<K4>v.

In secessuque pro certo/  
Vir est frequentissimus.<sup>89</sup>

A spiritually perfect man is a rare bird in a town. Do not believe the mendacious crowd!// But a large number of spiritually perfect men do exist in the desert and in withdrawal.

The exhortation ‘to leave the towns’ (‘urbes fugere’) is a central message of Musius’s poem. It is in this respect that he insists on the importance of the place (‘locus’): the lonely place is sacred, facilitates spiritual exercises, strengthens orthodoxy, and represents the ‘shortest way’ to heaven.<sup>90</sup>

### Solitary Places and Spaces, Physical and Imaginary

In this vein, Musius construes in his poem solitary places and spaces outside towns. Sometimes he calls these solitary places ‘desertum’ (desert), a concept with a long tradition in hermitism, which goes back to the desert fathers of early Christianity.<sup>91</sup> The core of this concept is that the place should be outside civilisation. One could easily find such places in the Egyptian and Syrian deserts in the third and fourth centuries AD, and European hermits imitated this type of retreat through withdrawal into mountainous regions, woodlands, and remote valleys. It was, however, more difficult to find such places in Southern Holland, which was by then a densely populated and urbanised region. In sixteenth-century Holland, ‘urbes fugere’, even if accompanied by the notion of ‘desertum’, could hardly mean to withdraw to an uninhabited region. But in the sixteenth century there was still a reasonable number of monasteries outside city walls, and these were probably the solitary places Musius had in mind in the first place. However, we cannot exclude that Musius also meant monasteries that were situated within the city walls, such as those of the mendicant orders (St. Agatha belonged to them). Anyway, it is clear that he included Franciscans, Dominicans, and *fratres minimi* in his list of examples of the solitary life.<sup>92</sup> Thus it could well be that for Musius ‘urbes fugere’ also meant to enter a monastery *within* the city walls. A monastery, after all, was regarded

89 Ibidem, fol. <G4>v.

90 Ibidem, fol. H<1>v.

91 For the desert fathers cf. *inter alia* Harmless W., *Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism* (Oxford: 2004); Görg P.H., *Die Wüstenväter: Antonius und die Anfänge des Mönchtums* (Augsburg: 2008).

92 *Solitudo*, fol. I2r–v.

as a secluded *place* with respect to its architecture and administrative aspects, such as jurisdiction and taxes. In a sense, one could hold that a monastery did not belong to a city, even if it was situated within the city walls. Thus, Musius's juxtaposition is: *eremus/ monastery/ monastic life* versus *Urbs/ mundus/ life in the “world”*:

*Nullus locus, ut videmus,/  
Prius dicit quam *Eremus* /  
Ad caeli palatia: //  
Nullus *Mundus* sic ditare,/  
Nullae *Urbes* sic beare,/  
Nulla potest *Regia*.<sup>93</sup>*

No other *place*, as we see, leads quicker to the palace of heaven than the *Eremus*: // The *Mundus* ('World') cannot make you richer, and no towns or king's palaces can make you happier.<sup>94</sup>

If Musius regarded monasteries of the mendicant orders as solitary places, one may expect that this also affects the way in which he construed his solitary landscapes. Accordingly, Musius's solitary landscapes are not realistic descriptions of the Dutch countryside. On the contrary, they contain imaginary elements, such as 'mountaintops', which are totally absent in the northern Low Countries, and exotic elements, such as fig trees. Mountains have a long tradition in hermit literature and in the iconography of hermits in the visual arts. Originally, they go back to the Syrian or Egyptian desert, with such places as Mount Colzim, near the Gulf of Suez, the place the desert father Antonius Abbas (ca. 251–356) chose for his hermitage.<sup>95</sup> This tradition also continued in Western monasticism, where monasteries and hermitages were built in mountainous areas. However, not all monasteries (and hermitages) were situated in such places. Metaphorical and symbolical language often superseded reality, not least in monastic literature. Among other things, the "mountain of contemplation" was a frequently used image. Like 'desertum' ('desert'), the 'mountain of contemplation' could be used symbolically for 'monastic life'. Thus, when Musius asks his readers to withdraw to a mountain, he means to enter monastic life.

93 Ibidem, fol. H<1>v (emphasis mine).

94 Emphasis mine.

95 Cf. my "Petrarch's Constructions of the Sacred Solitary Place" in this volume, section "Vaucluse and the Desert of the Desert Fathers".

Other symbolical or “figurative” landscapes could be construed with elements of biblical landscapes—for example, the fig tree (sycamore). The sycamore grew naturally in Lebanon, Israel (Jericho, Canaan), and Egypt. Of course, at first sight it may seem strange that a Dutch monk who wants to receive a vision of Christ should first climb a fig tree. But Musius alludes to Jesus’s entry into Jericho, to the story of his encounter with the tax collector Zacchaeus (*Luke 19:1–6*): Zacchaeus was eager to know more about Jesus. But since he was a small man, he could not see Jesus, who was surrounded by a crowd. So he climbed a sycamore to see him (*Luke 19:4*). Because of this he caught the attention of Jesus, and the Lord asked him to come down and announced that he would visit Zacchaeus personally, that he would come to his house. In Musius’s poem the sycamore tree has a symbolical value. It is a symbol for the monks’ love of Jesus, and their conversion to the Lord. In this sense, each monk has a sycamore tree in his cell, and he will climb on it each day a couple of times; and the Lord will reward his spiritual efforts, and he will ‘visit him’ and ‘enter his house’. Musius himself indicates that the fig tree is meant spiritually: ‘*Sed in sycomoro vere, / Ipsum (sc. Iesum) spiritu videre.*’<sup>96</sup>

Through the phrase ‘On the mountaintop you will find salvation’ Musius evokes yet another biblical landscape:<sup>97</sup> the plain of the river Jordan where the town of Sodom was situated, with its surrounding mountains. Musius refers to *Genesis 19*, to the story of Lot and his hometown, Sodom: two angels visit Lot in order to save him and take him out of Sodom because the Lord had decided to destroy it (19:1–16). Outside the city walls the Lord said to Lot: ‘Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain. *Escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed*’ (19:17).<sup>98</sup> The Lot chapter suits Musius’s exhortation ‘*fugere urbes*’ and ‘*withdraw to solitude*’ so well because it tells the story of a sinful city with aggressive townspeople—they were about to kill the angelic guests in Lot’s house—and of a man who gains salvation through escaping the city. It is in fact God himself who ordered Lot to leave the urban region of the plain and instead withdraw into the mountains. The Lot chapter deals, of course, with the solitary place and space in a very literal sense: Lot physically leaves Sodom, and the Lord asks him to withdraw physically to the mountain. If one wished to apply this text to sixteenth-century Holland, no real mountains were required. Here again, the biblical text is

96 *Solitudo*, fol. <K4>v (emphasis mine).

97 *Ibidem*, fol. <K4>r.

98 *King James Bible, Genesis 19:17; Vulgate*: ‘*Ibi locutus est (sc. Dominus) ad eum (sc. Loth): “Salva animam tuam. Noli respicere post tergum nec stes in omni circa regione, sed in monte salvum fac te, ne et tu simul pereas”*’ (emphasis mine).

open to symbolic interpretations: the Lot chapter offers the symbolic identification of a town with the *Mundus* (space of sins), and of mountain with the monastery (uncorrupted space). In such a symbolic interpretation it would be the Lord himself who asked man to leave the *Mundus* and to enter the monastery. And after that, the *Mundus* would be destroyed and the townspeople would go to hell, but the solitary man would gain salvation.

In his list of biblical examples of solitary men Musius mostly presents constructions of places of *solitudo* in the literal sense: desert landscapes as the natural habitat of the patriarchs. And for his catalogue of biblical solitary heroes Musius drew heavily on Petrarch's *De vita solitaria*.<sup>99</sup>

With respect to Abraham, Musius used Petrarch's description (which gave versions from both the Vulgate and Flavius Iosephus), in which Abraham was 'not sitting in a palace and amidst the luxury of a town' (Petrarch's words), but 'in a small valley called Mambre' (Vulgate) or under 'an oak tree called Mambre' (Flavius).<sup>100</sup> Petrarch preferred the Vulgate version with the 'small valley' (*Genesis* 18:1), which reminded him of Vaucluse, and he accordingly construed the biblical landscape as an Alpine valley with rich vegetation. Musius took over Petrarch's statement 'not in a town' but preferred Iosephus's oak tree, which nevertheless suggested that Abraham lived in the countryside and gave the biblical landscape a kind of European flavour:

Nec in urbibus sedebat (sc. Abraham),/  
 Quando tres excipiebat/  
 Angelos hospitio://  
 Sed sub quercu expectabat/  
 Peregrinos, quos tractabat/  
 Splendido convivio.

And Abraham was also not sitting in a town when he received the three angels as guests:// But he was waiting under an oak tree for his visitors, whom he treated to a splendid meal.<sup>101</sup>

99 Cf. my "Petrarch's Constructions of the Sacred Solitary Place", section "Vaucluse and the Landscape of the Old Testament".

100 Cf. my "Petrarch's Constructions of the Sacred Solitary Place", section "Vaucluse and the Landscape of the Old Testament"; Petrarch, *De vita solitaria* 11, 2, in *Petrarca, Prose*, ed. G. Martellotti (Milan – Naples: 1955) 418; Flavius Iosephus, *Antiquitates* 1, 11, 2.

101 Musius, *Solitudo*, fol. H2v.

In the evening, Abraham's son Isaac—as the Vulgate transmitted the text—went for a walk into the desert in order to meditate, to a waterhole called 'the well of the living and seeing' or 'the well of him that liveth and seeth me' (Beer-lahai-roi, the well where the Lord had met with Hagar). There Isaac first saw his future wife Rebecca, who had just arrived on a camel.<sup>102</sup> Although for sixteenth-century intellectuals it was not possible to precisely locate 'the well of him that liveth and seeth me', it was clear that it was a place in the desert, and that it must have been 'in the land of the South' ('in terra australi'). Musius added to the colourful locale, stating that Isaac liked this well more than the others because its water was 'sweeter than that of the others', and he identified this well with solitude.<sup>103</sup> With the repeated rhetorical question 'ubi? [...] ubi?' which he copied from Petrarch, Musius suggests that other biblical heroes lived in the desert and that they were *solitarii*.<sup>104</sup> It is a telling detail that he identifies their housing, i.e. tents, with the cells of monks ('cellae').<sup>105</sup>

### 'More Than 1520 Years Ago': The Origins of Monasticism

The 'solitary' biblical heroes had a special relevance for Musius: he used them as a counter-argument against the attacks of reformers who argued that monasticism was a later human invention that is in contradiction to the Bible. With the help of Petrarch's catalogue Musius could prove that this was not at all the case. If the patriarch Abraham was a *solitarius*, hermitism already had a kind of biblical legitimation from ca. 2000 BC on. Moreover, as Petrarch had shown in his catalogue of *solitarii* with the example of Adam, one could go back even to the very beginning of mankind—Adam started his life as a celibate *solitarius*:

Adam ille primus homo,/br/>Pulchro qui deceptus pomo,/br/>

<sup>102</sup> *Genesis* 24:62–64: 'Eo tempore Isaac deambulabat per viam quae dicit ad puteum cuius nomen est Viventis et Videntis. Habitabat enim in terra australi et egressus fuerat ad meditandum in agro inclinata iam die, cumque levasset oculos, vidit camelos venientes procul. Rebecca quoque conspecto Isaac descendit de camelo [...].'

<sup>103</sup> *Solitudo*, fol. H2v.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibidem*, fol. H3r.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibidem*: 'Parcius praecclare facta/ Intra urbes sunt peracta,/ Plurimis praesentibus;// Sed in cellis subve solis/ Umbra, Deus saepe solis,/ Mira fecit Patribus'—'Great deeds are rarely performed in towns, among a big number of people;// But when men are alone, in cells or in the shadow, God often has provided miracles in favour of the [biblical] Fathers').

Seque nosque perdidit,/  
 Solus vixerat beatus,/br/>
 Solus erat exaltatus,/br/>
 Comitatus cecidit.

The first man Adam who was deceived by the beautiful apple, and who ruined himself and us,/  
 Lived a blessed life and was exalted as long as he lived alone, but fell down when he was accompanied.<sup>106</sup>

Thus, through Adam man was in the very beginning, before original sin, a hermit, and paradise was originally a hermitage.

It is noteworthy, however, that Musius constituted the biblical patriarchs in solitary landscapes but did not call them 'monachi'. This probably means that he considered them to be only forerunners of monasticism. Musius thought that monasticism in its proper sense (i.e. as a Christian, coenobitic, and institutionalised form of life—'monachorum institutum') started with Christ. In the first part of the poem he refuted the argument of the reformers that monasticism was only a recent human invention. There, he stated that monasticism 'flourished more than 1,520 years ago', being invented by Christ, who transmitted it to the apostles. Obviously Musius regarded the apostolic *vita communis*, dedicated solely to Christ, to be a truly monastic form of life, although there were actually no institutions, no rules, no monasteries, etc. Musius probably concluded from the fact that the apostles lived together with Christ, but not with women, that they already obeyed the rule of celibacy. What exactly does it mean that Musius dates a first, flourishing period of monasticism back to 41 AD (or a bit earlier)? He refers here clearly to the years immediately after Christ's death.

*Monachorum institutum/*  
 Non est nuper institutum,/br/>
 Ut sectae insaniunt.//  
 Neque novum est commentum/  
 Neque recens est inventum,/br/>
 Quod hostes obiciunt.//

<sup>106</sup> Ibidem, fol. H<1>v; Petrarch, *De vita solitaria*, in *Prose* (ed. Martellotti) 418: 'Et ut a primis ordinar, Adam, publicus ille parens generis humani, quandiu solus fuit, nemo felicior; mox ut comitatus, nemo miserior; solus stetit, comitatus ruit [...]; cf. Hieronymus, *Vita Hilarionis*, Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 23, 53A.

*Sed annis ter quingentenis,/*  
*Ampliusque quam vicenis/*  
*Viguit Monastica.//*  
 A Christo enim incopta,/br/>
 Ab Apostolis recepta [...].<sup>107</sup>

The institute of monasticism is not a recent one, as the mad sectarians maintain// Nor does it depend on a new commentary, nor was it recently invented, as the enemies argue.// But monastic life flourished already more than 1,520 years ago.// Because it was invented by Christ and taken over by the apostles [...].

The idea that monasticism was invented by Christ was more or less commonly accepted by Catholics who defended monasticism against the reformers. It already occurs in the refutation of the *Confessio Augustana* by a Catholic committee (1530), in chapter 27, “De votis monasticis”,<sup>108</sup> and also in Francesco Torriani’s (Turrianus) *De votis monasticis*, which appeared in a revised version in 1566, in Rome.<sup>109</sup> Generally, the apologists for monasticism address the official institution, including the monastic vows of poverty, celibacy, and obedience. In doing so they refer to the Gospel: *Matthew* 19:10–12; and *Luke* 9:23, 12:13–34, and 14:25–35. They were convinced that it was Christ himself who required from the apostles an institutionalised renouncement of possessions and sexuality, and the vow of total obedience to him. Another thing was to prove that Christ himself had been a *solitarius*: that he had ‘preferred to be alone’ (‘Solus esse maluit’), e.g. to pray; that he withdrew into the desert in order to defeat the devil; and that he used to preach to his followers outside the cities, thus, again, in the desert. Musius mentioned these *aucto-ritates* from the New Testament, and in this respect he also used Petrarch’s *De vita solitaria*.<sup>110</sup> In a marked difference, however, Petrarch did not regard the apostles as the first *solitarii* or monks. Instead, he brought to the fore many older examples: not only the patriarchs of the Bible, but also the prophets, the Greek and Latin authors from antiquity (from Homer to Horace, and

<sup>107</sup> *Solitudo*, fol. C3r (emphasis mine).

<sup>108</sup> Cf. Immenkötter H. (ed.), *Die Confutatio der Confessio Augustana vom 3. August 1530* (Münster: 1979), chapter 27, 186–188.

<sup>109</sup> Rome, Vincentius Luchinus: 1566 (e.g. the exemplar of the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek 43.R.46), fol. 10r, chapter on “Quod tradit Calvinus monachismum ecclesiae nostre novitiam esse professionem redarguit”.

<sup>110</sup> Musius, *Solitudo*, fol. H3v; Petrarch, *De vita solitaria* II, 10, in *Prose* (ed. Martellotti) 504.

from Plato to Cicero), the Roman kings, the republican heroes (such as Scipio Africanus), and Roman emperors, such as Caesar and Augustus.<sup>111</sup>

The reason that Petrarch did not mention the apostles is probably that he had no special interest in coenobitic monasticism as such. He preferred to leave the question of organisation of life open and to focus on individual *solitarii*. Musius, on the other hand, had a clear preference for coenobitic monasticism: he considered it more cultivated and civilised than unbridled anachoretism.<sup>112</sup>

### Musius's Solitary Place and Radical Asceticism

Notwithstanding his preference for cultivated coenobitism Musius included some elements of a more austere asceticism in his ideal of *solitudo*, which were partly in accordance with the Council of Trent, partly due to a self-chosen radical simplicity. For example, he states that in a monk's cell there should be no ornaments, no pieces of art, no paintings, no sculptures, but also no table, no bed, no chair, no kneeler:

Cellae inspice ornatum/  
 Nihil invenies ornatum,/br/>
 nihil supervacuum://  
 Non ibi vana pictura/  
 Nec inutilis sculptura,/br/>
 Nihil est superfluum.//  
  
 Terra mensa et cubile,/br/>
 Terra scamnum et<sup>113</sup> sedile,/br/>
 terra oratorium.<sup>114</sup>

Look at the ornamentation of the monk's cell: There are no ornaments at all, nothing superfluous,// There is no idle painting, no useless sculpture, nothing superfluous,// The flour is the table and the bed, the flour is the stool and the chair, the flour is the kneeler.

<sup>111</sup> Petrarch, *De vita solitaria* II, 12–13, *Prose* (ed. Martellotti) 524–554.

<sup>112</sup> The prophets of the Bible represent 'a more uncultivated solitude', cf. *Solitudo*, fol. C3v: 'Quod si quis agrestiorem/ Illamque incultiorem/ Spectet solitudinem,// A priscis illis Prophetis/ Et claris Anachoretis/ Vendicet originem'.

<sup>113</sup> (*Ibidem*, fol. D2r) et *correi*: est *printed text of 1566*.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibidem*, fol. D2r.

If one looks at the situation of the sixteenth-century monastic houses, this does not sound realistic. As a matter of fact, sixteenth-century monks normally did not sleep and eat on the floor; and of course, monasteries were full of pieces of art. Not coincidentally, this came to the fore during the Dutch iconoclasm of 1566. Besides, the radical asceticism Musius demonstrated in the lines above is hardly autobiographical: on the contrary, he was a great art lover and patron of art, and he bought a number of paintings for St. Agatha and for himself; he especially admired the paintings of Maarten van Heemskerck,<sup>115</sup> who also painted his portrait [Fig. 3.1].<sup>116</sup> When cartographer Georg Braun (d. 1622), while preparing the famous collection *The Most Important Towns of the World (Urbium praecipuarum totius mundi)*, visited Delft (before 1581), he remarked that the chapel of St. Agatha was 'totally covered' with Van Heemskerck's excellent paintings, and that this was due to Musius's 'close friendship' with the painter.<sup>117</sup> In the middle of the seventeenth century, the paintings were apparently still *in situ*.<sup>118</sup> Karel van Mander saw there, among other things, a triptych of Van Heemskerck with *The Adoration of the Kings*.<sup>119</sup>

<sup>115</sup> cf. Veldman I.M., "Maarten van Heemskerck and Hadrianus Iunius: The Relationship between a Painter and a Humanist", *Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 7, 1 (1974) 37; eadem, *Maarten van Heemskerck and Dutch Humanism in the Sixteenth Century* (Maarssen: 1977) 97; Lemmens G.T.M., "Schilderkunst in Delft tot 1572", in Spaander I.V.T. – Leeuw R.A. (eds.), *De stad Delft: Cultuur en maatschappij tot 1572*, 2 vols. (Delft: 1979), vol. 1, 143–149; Grosshans R., *Maerten van Heemskerck: Die Gemälde* (Berlin: 1980).

<sup>116</sup> The portrait is preserved only in copies, and in an engraving made by Philips Galle, cf. above, Fig. 3.1 and Veldman, *Maarten van Heemskerck and Dutch Humanism* 98 (n. 8).

<sup>117</sup> Braun Georg, *Urbium praecipuarum totius mundi liber tertius* (Cologne, Georg Braun – Franz Hogenberg: 1581), fol. 29r: [...] virginei coetus basilica [= St. Agathae] propter arctam Musii, eiusdem coenobii praefecti vigilantissimi, et Hemskirckii Harlemicola, illius quidem Poetae clarissimi, huius vero pictoris celeberrimi, amicitiam tota intus exquisitissimis picturis contexta vestitaque erat'—[...] the church of the female convent (of St. Agatha) was filled and totally covered with very fine paintings [= by Maarten van Heemskerck], due to the close friendship between Musius, the very vigilant superior of the monastery, and Heemskerck of Haarlem, the one a very famous poet, the other a very famous painter' (translation after Veldman, *Maarten van Heemskerck and Dutch Humanism* 97).

<sup>118</sup> Bleyswijck Dirk van, *Beschryvinge der Stadt Delft* (Delft, Arnold Bon: 1667) 321.

<sup>119</sup> Mander Karel van, *Het schilder-boeck: het leven der doorluchtighe Nederlandtsche en Hoogh-duytsche schilders* (Haarlem, Paschier van Wesbusch: 1604), fol. 246r; *The Lives of the Illustrious Netherlandish and German Painters, from the First Edition of the schilder-boeck (1603–1604)* (Doornspijk: 1994–1999), vol. 1, 242; Veldman, *Maarten van Heemskerck and Dutch Humanism* 97–98 (no. 8). Unfortunately, the painting has not been preserved.

Musius's radical asceticism belongs to the realm of the *encomium*—frugality is one of the traditional topics in praise of the solitary life.<sup>120</sup> In the same vein Musius maintains that each monk builds his cot *with his own hands* ('*Suas quisque struit casas*'),<sup>121</sup> and without the help of a mason ('*operarius*'); that the monks' cots were very low and small ('*breves humilesque casas*');<sup>122</sup> that monks do not have cooks, but take care of their food themselves; that they only drink and eat what nature itself offers, namely 'water' and 'herbs'<sup>123</sup>—the monks certainly do not drink expensive wines and they do not wear expensive habits; instead of clothes they use the leaves of trees [sic!].<sup>124</sup> Musius's frugality, which seems to be overdone, was probably provoked by the attacks on monasticism by the Protestants, who criticised the luxurious lifestyle, sophisticated architecture, and exuberant art possessions of the monks. This is also probably the reason why Musius was so charmed by Lombardo della Seta's dialogue *De dispositione vite sue*,<sup>125</sup> in which he described a visit by two friends from Padua who were embarrassed by his sober lifestyle in his country house. One friend asked Lombardo what he usually ate, and he answered: 'bread and a bit of polenta, and sometimes cabbage, vegetables, and milk'. When the friend asked for a drink, Lombardo answered: 'In front of you there is a fountain: drink as much as you like'. And on the question 'Do you eat meat?' Lombardo replied: 'I am not a wolf', etc.<sup>126</sup> In Musius's poem "Urbani et solitarii colloquium" it is no longer the Italian humanist who displays this harsh asceticism, but 'a famous monk' ('celeber monachus'). The final statement of the poem comes from this monk, in which he insists that there is an irreconcilable divide between the monks and the people who belong to the world. It seems that Musius also has directed this poem against the Protestant critics of monasticism.

<sup>120</sup> Cf. Enenkel, *Petrarcas De vita solitaria* 211–212, 257–258, 297–299, 302, 305–310, 312–313, 316.

<sup>121</sup> *Solitudo*, fol. D2r (emphasis mine).

<sup>122</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>123</sup> Ibidem: 'Herba cibum, unda potum/ [...] praebent [...]// [...] Neque exquisitus cocus,/ Hic est necessarius.// [...] Suos quisque carpit cibos/ Quos [...] terra fundit omnibus'.

<sup>124</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>125</sup> Cf. Enenkel, "Ein Delfter Priester"; the text of the poem is edited on pp. 35–36.

<sup>126</sup> Ibidem 35: 'Et prior Urbanus "vegeto", inquit, "corpore cum sis, / Ecquid edis, quaeſo?" (Solitarius:) "Panem modicumque polentiae/ Atque olus interdum, tenui aut cum lacte legumen"./ (Urbanus:) "Haec tibi solus habe; sed lasso porrige potum"./ (Solitarius:) "Ecce tibi ante pedes puteus: quantumlibet hauri" [...]'].

### Solitudo and Its Enemies: Protestantism, Iconoclasm, Violence

As Petrarch did in *De vita solitaria*, in the poem *Solitudo* Musius devotes a long passage to the comparison of the ‘mundani’ and the ‘solitarii’, and this passage also is meant to formulate an irreconcilable divide between the monks and the people of the world.<sup>127</sup> When he describes the morals of the ‘mundani’, he lists exclusively negative aspects: impiety, cruelty, thirst for blood, their inclination to kill their fellow men, stubbornness, mendaciousness, idleness, vain-gloriousness, jealousy, fury, etc. And in the first part of the *comparatio*, Musius has already made it clear that he identifies the ‘mundani’ with his enemies, the Protestant sects:

Mundi incolae laborant/  
*Novis sectis, quas ignorant/*  
*Tuta haec refugia.//*  
 Mundus et impuritate/  
 Gaudet et<sup>128</sup> salacitate:  
 Hic damnantur talia.//

Mundus mutuum invadit,/br/>
 Caedit,<sup>129</sup> perdit, morti tradit/  
 Nec parcit a fratribus.<sup>130</sup>

The people of the mundus (of the world) suffer from new sects, of which nobody has heard in these safe refuges (i.e. monasteries).// The people of the world love impurity and scorn: here (i.e. in the monastery) such things are forbidden.// The people of the world attack their fellow men, slaughter them and kill them, and they do not spare their brothers.

It is the Protestant sects that Musius accuses of attacking and killing their fellow men. In this way, Musius divides the monks from his intellectual enemies, the Protestants, and he “frames” the latter as light-minded and stupid adherents of the world. Sects and factions are the result of corrupt morals and of wickedness. Monks, on the other hand, are peaceful, mild and quiet: It would be impossible for factions and sects to come into being in a monastery:

<sup>127</sup> *Solitudo*, fols. D2v–E3r.

<sup>128</sup> *et legendum: est in the edition of 1566.*

<sup>129</sup> *Caedit legendum: cedit in the edition of 1566.*

<sup>130</sup> *Solitudo*, fol. D3r (emphasis mine).

In mundo seditiones/  
 et horrendas factiones/  
 Saepe movent reprobi.//  
 In secessu non rumores,/br/>
 Caedes, clades nec furores/  
 Audiuntur improbi.<sup>131</sup>

In the Mundus wicked people often instigate horrendous rebellions and factions.// But one never hears of upheaval, murder, loss of blood and furious behaviour occurring in a monastery.

On the one hand, the divides between Mundus and monasticism seem to be universal. On the other hand there are enemies of monasticism who came into being only fairly recently. Therefore, Musius introduces a chronological element which is connected with the main argument of the *Solitudo* and recent developments: our times, as Musius puts it, are the worst of all; they are deplorable because the heretics seized power and became the majority. Therefore, the only possibility for the individual to safeguard his moral integrity is to withdraw from the world into solitude:

Non vides calamitosa,/br/>
 Turbulenta, factiosa,/br/>
 Tempora tristissima?//  
 Non vides conscelerata,/br/>
 Impia, exulcerata,/br/>
 Secula nequissima?//

Numera, si potes, sectas,/br/>
 In tam multas partes sectas,/br/>
 Numera Haereticos://  
 Fallor, si non pauciores,/br/>
 Si non numero minores/  
 Invenis Catholicos.//

Nec enim tantum Vicanis,/br/>
 Neque solis Oppidanis/  
 Simulati praesident,/  
 Sed et totas regiones,/

<sup>131</sup> Ibidem, fol. D3v.

Regna, aulas, ditiones,/

Violenti possident.<sup>132</sup>

Don't you see these calamitous, troublesome and miserable times?// Not this impious, iniquitous age, the worst of all ages?// Count, if you can, the heretical sects, the sects divided in so many parties; please, count the heretics!// It would be a miracle if you did not count far fewer Catholics than heretics.// The hypocrites are not only in charge of villages and small towns,// But of whole regions, kingdoms, princely residences and dominions, with much violence.

Musius presents it as a matter of fact that the reformers took power, and that they enacted a violent regime. In the final part of *Solitudo*, the danger seems to have come closer and points to a physical threat. Accordingly, solitude acquires more the character of a physical firewall. Musius does not summon the monks to fight against the heretics, but to withdraw behind the *walls of solitude*. The year 1566 was indeed characterised by much violence. The iconoclasm of the Low Countries started in July and reached Delft on 24 August, when the sculptures and paintings of the Oude Kerk—just opposite Musius's monastery, St. Agatha—were destroyed. In the final part of *Solitudo* Musius seems to allude to the iconoclasm in the Low Countries:

Quid dicam de [...] /

Simulacris [...] Divorum, /

Quid de imaginibus?//

Quas omnes, has decollatas, /

Has manus, pedes truncatas /

Tradiderunt ignibus.//

Hei, quot sunt dire tractati /

Nec simpliciter mactati /

Viri pientissimi: //

Sacerdotes non insulsi, /

Hei quot templis sunt expulsi, /

Ceu canes spurcissimi.//

Nihil dicam de rapinis, /

Quas sacrilegi divinis /

Vel ex aris auferunt//

<sup>132</sup> Ibidem, fol. <14>v.

[...] Libros sacros discerpserunt/  
 Et picturas expunxerunt/  
 Sacris cum historiis://  
 Sed et totum (ni vetantur)/  
 Christum tollere conantur/  
 Nostris ex memoriis.<sup>133</sup>

What should I say about the statues of the Saints?// They cut off their hands and feet and threw them all into the fire.// Woe! How many pious men were cruelly treated and badly tortured!// How many honourable priests were thrown out of their churches like filthy dogs! I do not even mention the robbery, the things the heretics took away from the churches and the altars.// [...] They were tearing apart the holy books and erased the miniatures with scenes from the Bible.// They would even erase Christ completely from our memory, if one would allow them to do so.

At the end of the poem Musius beseeches the reader to leave the towns and to withdraw into solitude, not only out of fear of contagion, but because of the physical danger that was posed by the reformers. Withdrawal seems to be the only way to avoid serious damage, either of the soul or physical.

### Conclusion: Aim, Audience, and Meaning of the Poem *Solitudo*

We should come back once more to the question of what readership Musius had in mind with his *Solitudo*, and what goals he may have wanted to reach. As I pointed out in the introduction, it can be ruled out that Musius wrote the poem specifically for “his” nuns of St. Agatha, e.g. as a blueprint for their monastic life. It is very likely that Musius wrote the poem with an eye on the recent situation, i.e. the high amount of pressure that was exerted by the Reformation on the Catholic clergy in general, and on monasticism more specifically. As he announces in the introductory poem “Monasticae vitae laudatae ratio”, he wants to ‘errantes revocare animas’ (‘to call back the straying souls’) who were somehow infected by modern disbelief, i.e. the Reformation.<sup>134</sup> This refers to individuals who became unsure about Catholicism in general, and more specifically about its sublimated form, monasticism. Musius presents his work as

<sup>133</sup> Ibidem, fols. K2v–K3r.

<sup>134</sup> *Solitudo*, fol. A3r: ‘[...] pravos divertere gressus/ Utile censem ab penitus Christoque fave[n]te/ Errantes revocare animas tutamque salutis/ Commonstrare viam [...].’

a reassurance of Christian believers, and as an effort to show them a safe way to God.<sup>135</sup> He did not write his work for convinced Calvinists or Lutherans, to persuade them that it was better for them to return to the Catholic faith. This does not go together with the polemic tendency and the harsh tone in which he presents his argument against the Protestants: he calls them 'heretics' and treats them as enemies throughout the work. At a certain point he seems to address them directly, but this is only the rhetorical figure of *exclamatio*, as is also stated in a marginal marker ('Exclamatio in haereticos'): also in this passage Musius scolds them, calling them 'guerrilla fighters against Christ', 'rebels against true belief', 'soldiers of Antichrist', and 'henchmen of Orcus'.<sup>136</sup>

Did he write *Solitudo* especially for humanists? As we have seen above, Musius was involved in a network of humanists—as an intellectual and as an author. From ca. 1536 on he presented himself as a humanist Latin *poeta*, and he was acknowledged and addressed by others as such. His very author's name, *Musius*, referred to the well-known antique deities of poetry. This framework was still relevant for the time when he composed and published *Solitudo*. In his introductory poems to Musius's *Solitudo*, the humanist Hadrianus Iunius addresses Musius's Muses: For example, he says that the Muses of antiquity left their home, Mount Helicon (in central Greece), to hear their beloved Musius singing and playing the lyre, to listen to his sacred music.<sup>137</sup> Musius himself dedicated his poem *Solitudo* to the Muse ("Ad Musam encomii dedicatio"), and he addressed her in a standard humanist way, as the goddess of poetic inspiration: 'Muse born in heaven,/ Many times when I worshipped you,/ You have done what I asked you [...]. Even the official Catholic censor of the work, Willem van der Lindt, introduced Musius as a venerator of the Muses, albeit 'the more pious Muses'—'Musas qui coluit pientiores'.<sup>138</sup> Given this presentation and self-presentation one may guess that Musius certainly wished to include his humanist friends. Also, it is probably no coincidence that he sent the

<sup>135</sup> This appears also from the *Imprimatur*, which addresses exclusively 'The reader that adheres to the true belief', i.e. of Catholic orthodoxy (cf. *Solitudo*, fol. <A1>v: 'Lectori verae pietatis studioso').

<sup>136</sup> Ibidem, fol. K3r: 'O vos Christi perduelles,/ Orthodoxiae rebelles,/ Antichristi milites!// Quando tandem desistetis,/ Aut quando resipiscetis,/ Vos, Orci satellites?'

<sup>137</sup> Hadrianus Iunius, poem "In Cornelii Musii Delphi libellum de solitudinis secessusve commoditatibus", in *Solitudo*, fol. A2r: 'Excessere suis adytis Heliconis alumnae,/ Carminibusque sui/ Illectae vatis, cantus odere profanos,/ Teque movente chelyn/ Sanctisonam faciles aure indulsere secunda.'

<sup>138</sup> *Solitudo*, fol. <A1>v. For Willem van de Lindt cf. Beuningen P. Th. van, *Wilhelmus Lindanus als inquisiteur en bisschop: Bijdrage tot zijn biografie (1525–1576)* (Assen: 1966); for his relationship with Musius, Noordeloos, *Cornelis Musius 157–158*.

work to Hadrianus Iunius as his “first reader”, in order to have it corrected, and that he had it presented through two introductory poems by the same Iunius, who was in those days the leading Dutch humanist.<sup>139</sup>

Nevertheless, there are several indications that Musius did not direct *Solitudo* to the humanists as its specific audience. First, he did not take into account their specific intellectual preferences. Although Musius insists on the fact that his *solitudo* should be a *solitudo literata*,<sup>140</sup> he does not mention specifically humanist interests, such as poetry, antiquity, Greek and Roman literature, philology, etc. The prefatory poems written by Iunius point to this difference: a humanist such as Iunius would praise solitude as the proper place for Latin poetry, for the sacred poet (‘vates’) who longs to stay away from the profane, ordinary people; who venerates Apollo and the Muses in solitude, and is inspired by them to sing eternal verses; and who receives the holy laurel from the god of poetry.<sup>141</sup> The people (‘turba’, i.e. townspeople) hate solitude, but the sacred poets love it (‘solitudo [...] turbae exosa, grata vatibus’); solitude inspires the mind and increases one’s eagerness to write. Therefore, *solitudo* should no longer be shy, and should appear in public.<sup>142</sup>

Furthermore, one may expect that the type of rhymed verses Musius chose for *Solitudo* did not exactly meet the tastes of humanists. Iunius is again the best example: he did not like them, although he was designated as the first reader and corrector of the poem. Iunius—like other humanists—would have preferred that Musius write in a metre current in Greek and Roman antiquity. Musius was certainly able to do so, and he could have written *Solitudo* just as well in Elegiac distichs, hexametric verses, Sapphic strophes, or one of the other metres used by Horace. This is already apparent from Musius’s own introductory poem, “Monasticae vitae laudatae ratio”, which is composed in hexametric verses.<sup>143</sup> In a private letter Iunius actually greatly regretted that Musius used medieval verses in his *Solitudo*: how agreeable the poem *Solitudo* would have been if Musius had chosen one of the metres of antiquity! Interestingly, Iunius interprets the choice for the medieval metre as a kind of loss of poetic

<sup>139</sup> “In Cornelii Musii Delphi libellum de solitudinis secessusve commoditatibus”, and “eiusdem Iunii ad eundem libellum”, in *Solitudo*, fol. A2r–v. For Iunius cf. Van Miert (ed.), *The Kaleidoscopic Scholarship of Hadrianus Iunius*.

<sup>140</sup> *Solitudo*, fol. C<1>r.

<sup>141</sup> Cf. ibidem, fol. A2r.

<sup>142</sup> Ibidem, fol. A2v.

<sup>143</sup> Ibidem, fol. A3r: —~—/— —/— —/— ~—/— —// (‘Quando animo maestus nuper praesentia flerem’). The accumulation of long syllables in this line is not a sign of a technical shortcoming, but functional, because it expresses the emotion of mourning.

strength and power, and in this respect he contrasts the young Musius with the author of *Solitudo*: young Musius flourished as a poet, but old Musius has somehow lost it. Why so? Iunius suspects that this may be due to Musius's long stay with the nuns (of St. Agatha).<sup>144</sup> From this remark one may deduce that Iunius, although he remained Catholic, was probably not very fond of the poem's topic either.

However, Iunius's judgement was not a verdict that negatively influenced the reception of *Solitudo*, and it was hardly representative for all readers, and probably not even for all humanist readers. As is apparent from the introduction of the *Verus monachus*, *Solitudo* was positively received by its audience. Stimulated by its success Musius decided to write another, similar poem in the same metre.<sup>145</sup> This means that he had no reason to regret his choice of metre. Furthermore, there is no doubt that if he had wanted to, he also would have been able to use antique metres. In the poems published together with *Solitudo*, hexametric verses ("Urbani et solitarii colloquium"),<sup>146</sup> Sapphic strophes ("Fugeniendum improborum hominum consortium"),<sup>147</sup> and elegiac distichs ("Ad Virginem Matrem sub sacrosanctam communionem supplicatio" and "Ad eandem Virginem et Matrem [...] gratiarum actio")<sup>148</sup> appear. Thus, we can be sure that Musius made a conscious choice of metre, and that he did so with an eye on the topic and the goals he had in mind with his work. In a final note to the reader he defends himself with respect to the metre: he asks the reader not to be offended by the rhymed verses ('Consonus usque sonus'), and states that he has chosen them because he wanted to compose a *hymn* and,

<sup>144</sup> Cf. Bidloo Lambert, *Panpoeticon Batavum* [...] (Amsterdam, Andries van Damme: 1720) 20: 'Wat Man Musius was, lust my uyt *Hadrianus Junius* te vertolken, "wat", zegt hy, "was er genoeglyker, wat zagter, wat scherpzinniger, als de eerste gedichten van Cornelius Musius! met hoe groote lieflykheyd, en aanminnigheyd lachen die! maar 't was jammer dat hy dezen zoetvloeienden Ader der *Poësy* zoo heeft verslapst, en verteerd, door zyn omgang met de Kloosterdogters. Wat zoude hy zyn *Eensaamheyd* (een tractaat by hem genoemd *Solitudo*) aangenaam hebben gemaakt, indien hy dat liever na *Poëtische* styl, als op *Rym* had belieft uyt te geven [...]".

<sup>145</sup> *Verus monachus*, autograph Utrecht, Archief Utrecht, *OKN*, *Verzamelde Stukken vikariaat Utrecht 1484–1699*, inventory no. 566, fol. 3r: 'Si Laudata Solitudo/ Eiusque beatitudo/ Evulgata placuit, // [...]. Cf. the translation above.

<sup>146</sup> *Solitudo*, fol. L<1>r–v.

<sup>147</sup> Ibidem, fols. M<1>r–<M2>v.

<sup>148</sup> Ibidem, fols. <M4>r–N2r; N2v.

with this goal in mind, has imitated the Fathers, especially Thomas Aquinas and Adam of St. Victor.<sup>149</sup>

This means that the concept he had in mind was that of a religious hymn, a poem that would work similarly to a liturgical song. Thus, the *laus* of the *encomium* was meant in the sense of the *laudes* of liturgy. Both Thomas Aquinas (ca. 1225–1274) and Adam of St. Victor (died 1046) wrote a number of hymns and sequences that were used in liturgy.<sup>150</sup> The metre Musius actually used is a strophe of two times three lines with the rhyme formula AAB CCB, and the rhythmical formula:

'---/---/---/---/---/---/---.

There are three important sequences authored by Thomas Aquinas and Adam of Victor that are written in the same strophical metre and which display an intertextual connection: Thomas's "Lauda Sion Salvatorem", which goes back to Adam's Easter sequence "Zyma vetus expurgetur" and to his Christmas sequence "Ecce dies celebris". They address the most important feasts of Catholic liturgy: Christmas, Easter, and Corpus Domini. "Lauda Sion Salvatorem" has a special importance: It was ordered around 1264 by Urban IV, and the pope asked Thomas to compose the liturgy for a completely new feast in celebration of the Eucharist and the Transubstantiation, the Catholic belief that during the mass the bread and wine become the real body and blood of Jesus:

Lauda Sion Salvatorem  
 Lauda ducem et pastorem  
 In hymnís et cánticis./  
 Quantum potes, tántum aude:  
 Quia major omni laude,  
 Nec laudare súfficis.//

Laudis thema speciális,  
 Panis vivus et vitalis,  
 Hódie propónitur./

<sup>149</sup> Ibidem, fol. L<1>r: 'Non hic displiceat, Lector, tibi carminis huius/ Consonus usque sonus./ Sic Sanctus Thomas scripsit, sic Victor Adamus/ Hymnographique patres'. Most elegantly, he composes this *excusatio* in an antique, Horatian metre, the first Archilochean strophe.

<sup>150</sup> For Adam of St. Victor, cf. Grosfillier J., *Les séquences d'Adam de Saint-Victor: Étude littéraire (poétique et rhétorique), textes et traductions, commentaires*, Bibliotheca Victorina 20 (Turnhout: 2008); Adam of St. Victor, *Sequences*, ed. and trans. J. Mousseau, Dallas Medieval Texts and Translations 18 (Louvain: 2013).

Quem in saceræ mensa coenæ,  
 Turbae fratrum duodenæ  
 Datum non ambígitur.//

Sít laus plena, sit sonora,  
 Sít jucunda, sit decora  
 Mentis jubilatio./  
 Díes enim solémnis ágitur,  
 In qua mensae prima recólitur  
 Hujus institúcio.//  
 [...]

Quod in coena Christus gessit,  
 Faciéndum hoc expréssit  
 In suí memóriam./  
 Docti sacris institútis,  
 Panem, vinum, in salútis  
 Cónsecrámus hóstiam.//

Dogma datur Christiánis,  
 Quod in carnem transit panis,  
 Et vinum in sanguinem.

Sion, lift up thy voice and sing:/ Praise thy Savior and thy King,/ Praise with hymns thy shepherd true./ All thou canst, do thou endeavour:/ Yet thy praise can equal never/ Such as merits thy great King./ See today before us laid/ The living and life-giving Bread,/ Theme for praise and joy profound./ The same which at the sacred board/ Was, by our incarnate Lord,/ Giv'n to His Apostles round./ Let the praise be loud and high:/ Sweet and tranquil be the joy/ Felt today in every breast./ On this festival divine/ Which records the origin/ Of the glorious Eucharist./ His own act, at supper seated/ Christ ordain'd to be repeated/ In His memory divine;/ Wherefore now, with adoration,/ We, the host of our salvation,/ Consecrate from bread and wine./ Hear, what holy Church maintaineth,/ That the bread its substance changeth/ Into Flesh, the wine to Blood.<sup>151</sup>

Thomas's sequence functioned as the liturgical foundation of an important Catholic dogma, the belief in the Transubstantiation, and represented a solemn meditative prayer regarding a deep religious mysterium. Moreover, this

<sup>151</sup> For the English translation cf. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lauda\\_Sion#cite\\_ref-2](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lauda_Sion#cite_ref-2).

sequence was performed in music in the Holy Mass: it was sung in Gregorian chant to the melody of “Laetabundi iubilemus”. It is, of course, beyond doubt that Musius was well acquainted with this sequence and its performance, and that he knew its text and music by heart.

Naturally, this all has implications for the sense and function of the poem *Solitudo*. The Eucharist and the Transubstantiation were among the most important articles of Catholic faith that they were denied by Musius's Calvinist enemies, and so was monasticism. Musius's poem was conceived as a solemn religious meditation on one of the important principles of orthodox Catholic belief, as an exercise of re-enacting and re-internalising it, in order to strengthen Catholic orthodoxy, and to separate it as much as possible from the convictions of the reformers, which Musius regarded as heretical. With his solemn meditative song Musius wanted to reassure himself and his fellow Catholics of the truth of their belief, and to safeguard their salvation. It is a telling detail that this goal was also addressed in the approbation of *Solitudo* by the inquisitor of Holland, Willem van der Lindt, in which he stated that ‘these sacred poems which are as much learned as pious, will very much increase piety and stabilise Catholic doctrine’<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> *Solitudo*, fol. <Q4>v: ‘Praeclara haec sacra poemata, non minus docta quam pia, eximie profuerint pietati promovendae doctrinaeque Catholicae stabiendi, si in publicam edantur lectionem’. For Willem van der Lindt cf. Beuningen, *Wilhelmus Lindanus*, and for his relationship with Musius, Noordeloos, *Cornelius Musius* 157–158.

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## Concepts of Solitude in Jacobus de Voragine's *Legenda aurea*\*<sup>1</sup>

*Dominic E. Delarue*

From the 1260s on, Jacobus de Voragine (1228/1229–1298) wrote his famous *Legenda aurea*, the most successful of the Dominican *legenda nova* projects transmitted in more than a thousand manuscripts.<sup>1</sup> The *Legenda aurea* provides a collection of the most important lives of saints, which are arranged in order of the ecclesiastical year. Chapters concerning major feast days of Christianity structure the sequence of hagiographic texts. Jacobus's legendary was very soon amended by additional hagiographic material—a process which helps distinguish different traditions of transmission.<sup>2</sup> Barbara Fleith established Jacobus's original selection of lives of saints and derived their order from the early manuscript tradition.<sup>3</sup> In comparison to Theodor Grässle's edition from 1846,<sup>4</sup> she was able to identify five legends as later additions and to allocate a new position within the corpus to two texts. Giovanni Paolo Maggioni confirmed her findings in his critical edition, but also accepted the legend of Syrus as a further original text.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore he rearranged the order of four legends.

Although the most widely read legendary of the late Middle Ages, Jacobus de Voragine's *Legenda aurea* is not the first *legenda nova* project. Jacobus based his work on the older legendaries of two other Dominicans, the *Abbreviatio in gestis et miraculis sanctorum* by Jean de Mailly (d. shortly after 1260) and

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1 Cf. the comprehensive list in Fleith B., *Studien zur Überlieferungsgeschichte der lateinischen Legenda aurea*, Subsidia hagiographica 72 (Brussels: 1991).

2 Ibidem 35–36. The author provides a list of all additional legends to Jacobus's text including references to their manuscript tradition (435–497).

3 Ibidem 30–42.

4 Voragine Jacobus de, *Legenda Aurea vulgo Historia Lombardica dicta*, ed. T. Grässle (Dresden: 1846).

5 Voragine Jacobus de, *Legenda aurea*, Millennio medievale 6 (= Millennio medievale. Testi 3), ed. G.P. Maggioni, 2 vols. (2nd ed. Florence: 1999 [1998]).

the *Epilogus in gesta sanctorum* by Bartholomeo da Trento (d. 1251), other hagiographic material and apocryphal texts.<sup>6</sup> The *legenda novae* are conceived as a sum of the most essential hagiographic knowledge in one volume.<sup>7</sup> Unlike Jacobus de Voragine, Jean de Mailly and Bartholomeo da Trento explicitly mention the audience their collections address. Jean de Mailly originally wrote his legendary for the parochial priests ('parochiales presbiteros'), but after his entrance into the Order of Preachers, the reworked text surely gained a wider audience among Dominicans.<sup>8</sup> Bartholomeo even specified the function of his collection, which should be a useful tool for the preachers who were in need of suitable exempla to support the arguments of their sermons.<sup>9</sup> Bearing in mind that the *Legenda aurea* was quickly spread by its extensive use in the Dominican school milieu, one surely can ascribe the same function to Jacobus's text.<sup>10</sup> However, its use was by no means limited to the Order of Preachers as the legendary was very soon also integrated into the reading canon of other monastic schools.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, the text was translated into the vernacular no later than around 1280 and became one of the favourite edifying books among laymen and -women.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, the *Legenda aurea* can be considered the most important source of common hagiographic knowledge in late medieval society.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Fleith B., "Die *Legenda aurea* und ihre dominikanischen Bruderlegendare: Aspekte der Quellenverhältnisse apokryphen Gedankenguts", *Apocrypha* 7 (1996) 167–192.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Philippart G., *Les légendiers latins et autres manuscrits hagiographiques*, Typologie des sources du Moyen Âge occidental 24–25 (Turnhout: 1977) 45–48. The *legenda novae* have to be understood as an alternative to the large Cistercian legendaries of the twelfth century comprising several volumes. Alain Boureau especially argues that the *Legenda aurea* has to be conceived as a sum of Christian belief and doctrine while Jacque Le Goff accentuates its character as a sum of time (Boureau A., *La légende dorée: Le système narratif de Jacques de Voragine, † 1298* (Paris: 1984), esp. 14; Le Goff J., *À la recherche du temps sacré: Jacques de Voragine et la "Légende dorée"* (Paris: 2011) and Le Goff J., "Préface", in Boureau, *La Légende dorée* i–vii).

<sup>8</sup> Maggioni G.P., "Introduzione", in Mailly Jean de, *Abbreviatio in gestis et miraculis sanctorum: Supplementum hagiographicum*, *Editio Princeps*, ed. G.P. Maggioni, Millennio medievale 97, Testi 21 (Florence: 2013) vii–cxcviii, incl. five plates, at xix.

<sup>9</sup> Paoli E., "Introduzione", in Trento Bartolomeo da, *Liber epilogorum in gesta sanctorum*, ed. E. Paoli, Edizione nazionale dei testi mediolatini 2 (Florence: 2001) xvii–lxiv, at xxxii.

<sup>10</sup> Fleith, *Studien zur Überlieferungsgeschichte* 404–430 and Boureau, *La légende dorée* 24.

<sup>11</sup> E.g. for Paris cf. Fleith, *Studien zur Überlieferungsgeschichte* 425–426.

<sup>12</sup> The probably oldest surviving French translation is transmitted in Paris, BnF, ms. fr. 20330, a manuscript dating in the 1270s. A brief description of the manuscript including a bibliography is provided at <http://jonas.irht.cnrs.fr/manuscrit/71276> (accessed: 31.03.2018).

The text consists of 178 chapters, 155 of which are dedicated to a feast of the sanctorale.<sup>13</sup> In doing so, Jacobus de Voragine has reduced the number of saints included in the legendary compared to 280 feasts in the *Liber epilogorum* and 176 in the third and final version of the *Abbreviatio*.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, he chose to add a series of five saints at the end of the ecclesiastical year, who had not been incorporated in the older *legenda novae*.<sup>15</sup> The five desert fathers, Pastor, John, Moses, Arsenius, and Agathon (followed by the story of Barlaam and Josaphat, already present in the *Liber Epilogorum*), draw the readers' attention to a category of saints so far hardly incorporated into the collection. The vast majority of the included saints belong to the apostles, other biblical saints, and the early Christian martyrs, who are essentially completed by some late antique and early medieval confessors, mainly bishops and the founders of the principal monastic communities.<sup>16</sup> If one reconsiders the collection in the perspective of its final emphasis on the desert fathers and their way of life, one realises that the topics of hermitism, solitude, and desert recur several times in the lives and are treated in a nuanced way so that the *Legenda aurea* provides a panorama of different forms of solitary life. The topic is addressed for a first time in January when the feasts of the three famous desert fathers Paul of Thebes, Macarius, and Anthony are celebrated. The desert fathers of Egypt and Palestine are mirrored in the Western hermit Giles. These male hermits are complemented by Benedict and Jerome, who live a solitary life that is not more than a necessary transitory period. Female forms of solitude and hermitic life are introduced in the lives of Theodora, Marina, Pelagia, Margaret, Thais, Mary of Egypt, and Mary Magdalene. The common feature of the depicted female solitudes lies in

<sup>13</sup> Cf. the critical edition by G.P. Maggioni (Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea*).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. the critical edition Jean de Mailly, *Abbreviatio in gestis et miraculis sanctorum* (ed. G.P. Maggioni) and Bartolomeo da Trento, *Liber epilogorum in gesta sanctorum* (ed. E. Paoli).

<sup>15</sup> In the three versions of Jean de Mailly's *Abbreviatio* and in Bartholomeo da Trento's *Liber epilogorum* the lives of the desert fathers are neglected. However, the supplement to the third version of the *Abbreviatio* includes several lives of desert fathers, male and female, including abbot Moses, whereas the additions to Bartholomeo da Trento's *Liber epilogorum* comprise only John the abbot and Mary of Egypt. In vernacular legendaries, texts concerning the desert fathers are added to the lives and passions of apostles and martyrs already from the 1240s on (cf. the manuscripts London, BL, Royal 20 D vi and Paris, BnF, ms. fr. 23686; a brief description of the manuscripts including a bibliography is provided at <http://jonas.irht.cnrs.fr/manuscrit/31258> and <http://jonas.irht.cnrs.fr/manuscrit/48164>, accessed: 31.03.2018).

<sup>16</sup> Cf. the overview in Boureau, *La légende dorée* 36–38. The only other male desert fathers in a strict sense are Paul of Thebes, Anthony, and Macarius.

the notion of repentance respectively the idea of punishment for fleshly sins. Although more than twenty feast days are more or less obviously connected to a life in solitude, the topic remains an undercurrent, but a steadily streaming one.

This textual aspect will be explored by focusing on the main chapters treating concepts of solitary life and will be examined from the perspective of Dominican views on solitude and the desert fathers in the thirteenth century. Selected are the aforementioned saints who are not treated in their order of appearance in the *Legenda aurea*, but in thematically related groups: at first the desert fathers of January, those at the end of the text, and the story of Barlaam and Josaphat, followed by three saints, Giles, Benedict, and Jerome, who live in solitude before they are head of a monastery, and finally female hermits. This selection of nineteen saints in total is limited to those legends in which a solitary life is a central issue either as the essence of the life or as a crucial period of the saintly biography under discussion. Therefore, occasional appearances of hermits in lives of saints who do not live in solitude themselves are omitted as well as short scenes within a life happening at solitary places, and the solitude of figures other than the saint at the centre of a chapter.<sup>17</sup> The textual analysis is based on the critical edition by Maggioni and thus limited to the supposed original corpus of texts. Maggioni's numbering is used to indicate the chapters referred to.

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<sup>17</sup> Boureau A., "Vitae fratrum, Vitae patrum: L'Ordre dominicain et le modèle des Pères du désert au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle", *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome: Moyen-Âge* 99, 1 (1987) 79–100, at 85 refers to fifteen chapters dedicated to the desert fathers including John the Almsgiver whose life actually does not deal with the life in the desert, but is interpreted as the *vita* of an urban hermit in which the city therefore becomes a new desert (99). Boureau does not mention Western hermits (Benedict and Giles), but adds Mary Magdalene and Jerome to his fifteen desert fathers. Other chapters, e.g. that on Basil, also mention hermits or forms of solitude. It is, however, remarkable that solitude is not a core issue in the lives of the founders of monastic orders after Benedict. Neither Francis's struggle between a life of solitude and one in community nor Augustin's life among anchorites have a special treatment. Both topics are important for the understanding of different movements within the Franciscan order respectively within the Augustinian communities (cf. Roest B., "The Franciscan Hermit: Seeker, Prisoner, Refugee", *Church History and Religious Culture* 86 (2006) 163–189; Saak E.L., "Ex Vita patrum formatur Vita fratrum: The Appropriation of the Desert Fathers in the Augustinian Monasticism of the Later Middle Ages", *Church History and Religious Culture* 86 (2006) 191–228 and Elm K., "Elias, Paulus von Theben und Augustinus als Ordensgründer. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichtsschreibung und Geschichtsdeutung der Eremiten- und Bettelorden des 13. Jahrhunderts", in Patze H. (ed.), *Geschichtsschreibung und Geschichtsbewußtsein im späten Mittelalter*, Vorträge und Forschungen herausgegeben vom Konstanzer Arbeitskreis für mittelalterliche Geschichte 31 (Sigmaringen: 1987) 371–397).

### Dominicans, Solitude, and the Desert Fathers

Undoubtedly, the Dominican Order is intrinsically tied to the evolving urban life in the late Middle Ages.<sup>18</sup> The city is the stage, on which the Order of Preachers can easily reach its audience, on which they can spread the word of God and fight heretical views on Christian belief. Despite their genuine bond to the urban space and the communicative nature of their service to God and Church, the Dominicans did not only understand themselves as successors of the apostles, but also constantly referred to the early desert fathers in whom they recognised both the forerunners of the Western monastic tradition and role models in the life and spirit of the apostles.<sup>19</sup> The Dominican interest in the desert fathers becomes already manifest in the *vitae* of Dominic, who is recurrently depicted as a vivid reader of Cassian's *Collationes* and willing not only to read the sayings of the desert fathers, but to imitate them.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, it is not surprising at all that the *Collationes*, the *Vitae et dicta patrum* and the *Liber Barlaam* belonged to the reading canon of Dominican neophytes,<sup>21</sup> that the *Vitas patrum* were used as a literary model for the *Vitas fratrum* by Gérard de Frachet,<sup>22</sup> and that Jacobus integrates at least a part of these texts in his *Legenda aurea*.<sup>23</sup>

However, the preachers' interest in the desert fathers does not seem to be aroused by their living in solitude, but by their *vita apostolica*. The conduct of the desert fathers meets the apostolic ideal of poverty and preaching by adapting it to a certain constellation in the history of salvation. Thus, they had

<sup>18</sup> Cf. recently Bruzelius C., *Preaching, Building and Burying: Friars in the Medieval City* (New Haven, CT: 2014) and Boureau, "Vitae fratrum, Vitae patrum" 80, notes 5–6.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Boureau, "Vitae fratrum, Vitae patrum"; Gnädiger L., "Das Altväterzitat im Predigtwerk Johannes Taulers", in Brantschen J. – Selvatico P. (eds.), *Unterwegs zur Einheit: Festschrift für Heinrich Stirnimann* (Fribourg: 1980) 253–267 and Kaup S., "Et Ordinem Praedicatorum secundum librum de Collationibus Patrum instituit et vivere docuit: Aspekte der Wüstenväterrezeption in der *Chronica parva Ordinis Praedicatorum* des Galvano Fiamma O.P.", in Prügl T. – Schlosser M. (eds.), *Kirchenbild und Spiritualität: Dominikanische Beiträge zur Ekklesiologie und zum kirchlichen Leben im Mittelalter. Festschrift für Ulrich Horst OP* (Paderborn et al.: 2007) 197–217.

<sup>20</sup> Kaup, "Et Ordinem Praedicatorum" 198–199.

<sup>21</sup> Ibidem 198 cites *De officiis ordinis* by Humbertus de Romanis.

<sup>22</sup> Boureau, "Vitae fratrum, Vitae patrum" 85–87 and 90–94. According to Boureau the Dominican interest in the desert fathers is rooted in the search for a role model of an ambivalent constellation: to be separated from the established ecclesiastical institutions while the order remains a part of the Church (99–100). This has to be understood as demarcation from the heretics who also claimed to live in the tradition of the apostles and the early Christian Church.

<sup>23</sup> Ibidem 84–85.

already fulfilled the task the Order of Preachers formulated for the thirteenth century: to revitalise the apostolic ideal of early Christianity. Furthermore, the sayings of the fathers frequently discuss problems of obedience and chastity so that all three monastic vows—obedience, chastity, and poverty—are treated. Interestingly, there is a certain hierarchy among these values since the Dominican neophytes only speak aloud the vow of obedience.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, the Order of Preachers considers poverty as its specific way to powerfully testify to the word of God. Unlike the Franciscans, poverty is not an ideal that has to be obtained but an instrument in the service of an ultimate goal.<sup>25</sup> A comparable distinction forms the core of Dominican spirituality summarised by a maxim derived from Thomas Aquinas: *contemplari et contemplata aliis tradere*.<sup>26</sup> The *vita contemplativa* has its value because one's own divine experience is the precondition of being an authentic preacher. The maxim of Thomas Aquinas, thus, illustrates the Dominican interpretation of the *vita apostolica* as a *vita mixta*.

Accordingly, Thomas Aquinas formulates a well-balanced view on solitude in his *Summa theologiae*.<sup>27</sup> In an analogy to poverty, solitude is understood as a means to perfection which aims at a contemplative life:

Unde non congruit religionibus, quae sunt ordinatae ad opera vitae activae sive corporalia, sive spiritualia: nisi forte ad tempus, exemplo Christi [...].<sup>28</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Senner OP W, "Die 'Rede der unterscheidunge' als Dokument dominikanischer Spiritualität", in Speer A. – Wegener L. (eds.), *Meister Eckhart in Erfurt*, Miscellanea Mediaevalia: Veröffentlichungen des Thomas-Instituts der Universität zu Köln 32 (Berlin – New York, NY: 2005) 109–121, at 114.

<sup>25</sup> Ibidem 116–117.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. 'Sicut enim majus est illuminare, quam lucem solum videre, ita majus est contemplata aliis tradere, quam solum contemplari'. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* II, II, q. 188, a. 6 (quoted from Aquinas Thomas, *Summa theologiae*, ed. Albertus-Magnus-Akademie, 36 vols. (Heidelberg et al.: 1933–)); 'For even as it is better to enlighten than merely shine, so is it better to give to the fruits of one's contemplation than merely to contemplate'. Aquinas Thomas, *Summa theologiae*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 3 vols. (New York, NY et al.: 1947–1948), vol. 2, 1999.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Hedwig K., "Solitudo circa subiectum: Über den Begriff der Einsamkeit bei Thomas von Aquin", in Vijgen J. (ed.), *Indubitanter ad veritatem: Studies Offered to Leo J. Elders SVD* (Budel: 2003) 219–234.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* II, II, q. 188, a. 8.

Wherefore it is not suitable to those religious orders that are directed to the works whether corporal or spiritual of the active life; except perhaps for a time, after the example of Christ [...].<sup>29</sup>

In another *quaestio* Thomas stresses that Christ has deliberately chosen an active life so that one can recognise the Dominican *vita mixta* in the life of Christ.<sup>30</sup> Thomas Aquinas's argument makes it evident that solitude is not a suitable ideal for the apostolic life the Order of Preachers has chosen. Nevertheless, Thomas does not simply reject a solitary life. He even ranks it above an active life since it can only be lived by someone already in the state of perfection.

Sicut igitur id quod jam perfectum est, preeminet ei quod ad perfectio-  
nem exercetur: ita vita solitariorum, si debite assumatur, preeminet  
vitae sociali [...].<sup>31</sup>

Accordingly, just as that which is already perfect surpasses that which is being schooled in perfection, so the life of the solitaries, if duly practiced, surpasses the community life.<sup>32</sup>

This necessary perfection is either obtained 'per divinam gratiam' (by divine grace) or 'per exercitium' (by practice) that exercises the senses to discern between good and evil. Otherwise the solitary life is the more dangerous way of living because it is against the human nature as a social being.<sup>33</sup> Here, the negative connotation that Thomas Aquinas associates in general with 'solitudo' has its effects. Basically 'solitudo' is understood as an exclusion of a community or group.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* (engl.), vol. 2, 2003.

<sup>30</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* III, q. 40, a. 1. Cf. Hedwig, "Solitudo circa subiectum" 224–225.

<sup>31</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* II. II, q. 188, a. 8.

<sup>32</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* (engl.), vol. 2, 2003.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Hedwig, "Solitudo circa subiectum" 226–228.

<sup>34</sup> Ibidem 222.

## Different Forms of Solitude in the *Legenda aurea*

### *The Desert Fathers*

The nuanced Dominican view on solitude and the idea of the desert fathers as role model of an apostolic life help to interpret the different forms of solitary life assembled in the *Legenda aurea*. The three hermits of January, Paul of Thebes (ch. 15), Macarius (ch. 18), and Anthony (ch. 21), are examples of those who can safely live a solitary life by the grace of God. The first hermit life in the *Legenda aurea* is dedicated to Paul of Thebes, the first hermit who decided on abandoning the world to escape the persecution of emperor Decius. Paul's life in the desert is characterised by so complete an isolation that a mythical creature, a centaur, has to describe the way to Anthony, who is searching for the hermit's cave. The desert's remoteness provides security not only with regard to the outer enemies, but also with regard to the inner temptation of the flesh, as vividly described in a scene at the beginning of the chapter:

Adest quedam iuuencula corpore pulcherrima et impudica ac impudice tractat iuuenem dei amore repletum. Cum autem ille in carne motus contrarios rationi sensisset, non habens arma quibus ab hoste se eruat, linguam propriam dentibus suis incidit et in faciem impudice expuit et sic temptationem dolore fugauit et tropheum laude dignum promeruit.<sup>35</sup>

Then a very beautiful but totally depraved young woman was sent to defile the body of the youth, whose only love was for God. As soon as he felt the disturbance of the flesh, having no weapon with which to defend himself, he bit out his tongue and spat it in the face of the lewd woman. Thus he drove out temptation by the pain of his wound and won the crown of martyrdom.<sup>36</sup>

Moreover, God sends Paul every day a crow, which carries a piece of bread to nourish the saint. This divine gift secures Paul's survival without any corporal efforts as if the fall of man had never happened. When he dies in prayer after the encounter with Anthony, his soul is immediately taken up into heaven. Anthony, who is witness to this crucial moment that demonstrates Paul's holiness, returns to the hermitage and buries the saint with the help of two tame lions, which function as a last reference to earthly paradise—the peace

<sup>35</sup> Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea* xv, 7–8 (vol. 1, 141).

<sup>36</sup> Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, trans. W.G. Ryan, 2 vols. (Princeton, NJ: 1993), vol. 1, 84.

between all species. Paul is the example of the already perfect human being who can live in a paradisiac solitude due to divine grace.

This originally involuntarily chosen, yet perfect solitude has its counterpart in Anthony's life. At the age of twenty, he, who believes himself to be the first hermit, hears words of the gospel advertising a life in poverty. Thus, he spontaneously decides to sell all his possessions and to give the proceeds to the poor. Afterwards he retreats from his mundane life into the solitude of the desert and lives the life of a hermit. The brief report of Anthony's way into the desert ends with a laconic characterisation of his solitude. For Anthony, living the life of a hermit means to resist continuously numerous trials inflicted by devils and demons.<sup>37</sup>

Like Paul, Anthony can live as a hermit due to divine grace, without a long period of practice that leads to the necessary perfection. The only condition is poverty in the tradition of the apostolic life. Nevertheless, the text also points to the dangers of solitude that Anthony has to overcome. His hermitic life is not situated in a paradisiac setting, but full of threats to his purity which is endangered by demons and devils. They are presented in small episodes that are loosely arranged. Another aspect is Anthony's constant contact with his brethren, who seek guidance, and other Christians who rely on his wisdom. Furthermore, Anthony reacts to the threat of Arianism when he writes a letter to Ballachius, a highly ranked Egyptian heretic, that predicts God's wrath if the heretic did not stop his persecution of Christians. By living in poverty, fighting heresy, and spreading the word of God, Anthony can easily be understood in the succession of the apostles.<sup>38</sup> At the end of the chapter, his peaceful death is briefly mentioned probably to delineate the contrast to the violent martyrdoms suffered by the majority of other saints.

The third desert father venerated in January is Macarius. His life is a collection of short anecdotes comparable to the chapter on Anthony. Like Anthony, this hermit is also threatened by various temptations as well as by evil spirits. A new motif of the chapter is Macarius's mobility that structures his life in times of complete solitude and those of a common solitude with his brethren. Already the first sentence of his life alludes to this motif:

Macharius abbas descendit de Syti et intravit dormire in monumento [...] .<sup>39</sup>

37 Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea* XXI, 11 (vol. 1, 155).

38 Boureau, "Vitae fratrum, Vitae patrum" 88–90 has emphasised the deliberate construction of structural parallels in the *vitae* of Anthony and Dominic.

39 Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea* XVIII, 5 (vol. 1, 149).

Macarius the abbot, making his way one day across a vast desert, paused to sleep in a tomb [...].<sup>40</sup>

The motif of walking in the desert is repeated, varied and even intensified in other episodes. Furthermore, it is linked to encounters with the devil or the fight against fleshly desires. Like Anthony's *vita*, the chapter concludes with a note on Macarius's death, which does not seem as peaceful as Paul's or Anthony's passing away since it is related to the preceding anecdote. Macarius kills a flea that has bitten him with his hand. For this act of vengeance, he punishes himself by abandoning his shelter and living naked in the desert. At the end of a period of six months, the abbot returns to his fellow monks. His body is covered with bites and scabs and so weakened that he dies after this final proof of his virtues.<sup>41</sup> The reader observes Macarius in a moment of lacking self-control, but recognises at the same time the saint's ability to reflect on his impulsive reaction and his strength to severe self-punishment. Macarius appears in this anecdote as a hermit who strives for the state of perfection by continuous self-observation and exercise.

The sequence of five desert fathers at the end of the ecclesiastical year (chs. 171–175) also follows the loose anecdotic structure of the chapters on Anthony and Macarius. The episodes deal again with temptations of wealth, sexual desire, impatience, or immodesty, which threaten the inner orientation of the monks towards the core values of poverty, chastity, and obedience as well as modesty. In the first of these chapters abbot Pastor summarises the essence of the life in the desert:

“Custodire et se ipsum considerare et discretionem habere, operationes sunt anime; paupertas, tribulatio et discretio sunt operationes solitarie uite. [...] Si duas res oderit monachus, potest ab hoc mundo liber esse”. Et querenti fratri que essent dixit: “Carnalis repausatio et uana gloria. Si uis requiem inuenire in hoc seculo et in futuro, in omni causa dic: ‘Quis sum ego?’ et ‘Non iudices quemquam’”.<sup>42</sup>

“To be one's guard, to examine oneself, and to have discernment, these are operations of the soul; poverty, tribulation, and discernment are the

<sup>40</sup> Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. 1, 89. Note that Ryan's translation follows another filiation of the text than Maggioni's edition. This tradition reads 'per vastitatem deserti' instead of 'de Syti'.

<sup>41</sup> Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea* XVIII, 56–60 (vol. 1, 151).

<sup>42</sup> Ibidem CLXXI, 30–39 (vol. 2, 1225).

works of the solitary life. [...] If a monk hates two things, he can be free of this world." To a brother who asked what the two things were, he said: "Bodily comfort and empty glory. If you wish to find rest in this world and in the next, in every instance say: 'Who am I?' And judge no one!"<sup>43</sup>

This essence is unfolded in all five chapters of the desert fathers and re-discussed in short exempla depicting the life in solitude as a rewarding gift and as a constant exercise that may miscarry. The final story of Barlaam and Josaphat (ch. 176) combines hermitism with the apostolic mission. The hermit Barlaam converts the pagan prince Josaphat to Christianity by interpreting the gospels and by authenticating the explanations in his way of life. The closeness to the Dominican *contemplari et contemplata aliis tradere* is apparent.

*Giles, Benedict, and Jerome: Solitude as a Transitional Period of Life*

In the *Legenda aurea*, Western hermitism is most prominently represented in the life of Giles (ch. 123), whose journey from Athens towards the solitude in the region of Arles is retold by Jacobus de Voragine. After his arrival in France, the saint lives at first as a companion of the hermit Veredonius. The place shared with Veredonius is described as barren, but it becomes fertile through the hands of Giles, who even develops the capacity to work miracles. To avoid the danger of human adulation, Giles leaves his master in favour of an even remoter place where he finds a cave as shelter and a small spring. There a doe nourishes him with her milk.<sup>44</sup>

The 'desert', Giles's solitude, is described in terms of a *locus amoenus* (the spring, the natural shelter of a cave, the tame wild animal). The nature of this desert is not dangerous but comforting. It is a paradisiac place where God's creation seems intact and self-sustaining. Therefore, Giles's solitude is perfectly in line with the prototype of hermit solitude described in the life of Paul of Thebes while the solitude of the other desert fathers is characterised by the threats of temptation. However, Giles's idyll will be disturbed when the king of France hunts the saint's doe. One of the royal hunters injures the saint with an arrow that was supposed to slay the animal. The king is so impressed by the saint's holiness that he founds a monastery in his honour. Although Giles tries to refuse to be the head of the new foundation, he finally accepts the responsibility of being an abbot. In this legend, solitude is described as a perfect state of being human that is temporally limited despite all rewards of the saint.

43 Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. 2, 347–348.

44 Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea* CXXIII, 9–10 (vol. 2, 887–888).

The temporal limitation of solitude is crucial for its occurrence in the lives of Benedict (ch. 48) and Jerome (ch. 142), who both start their monastic career as hermits. A noteworthy idea in the life of Benedict is the reversion of the story. It is not the journey into the desert that is narrated, but the gradual transformation of his hermitic life in the wilderness of Subiaco into a cenobitic life. Benedict's three years in complete solitude (only supplied with food by the monk Romanus) is a divine gift rewarded to the already perfect boy. Nevertheless, even Benedict has to fight continuously against the vicious artifices of the devil. However, he can finally outdo the inner temptations of the flesh: one day the devil tempted Benedict's spirit with the image of a woman. As the demon succeeded in arousing the hermit's desire, Benedict started already thinking of abandoning his life in solitude. Yet, he was finally capable of resisting the temptation with God's grace, undressed and rolled naked in thorns so that the pain of the body cured his mind's sinful desires forever.<sup>45</sup>

In contrast to this one sustainable cure from fleshly lust, Jerome describes, in a letter to Eustochium quoted by Jacobus de Voragine, his retreat to the desert as a long and painful exercise of penitence to purify his body and mind with tears. Clearly, the desert is not any longer a place where the saint can seek protection from corporeal desires as Paul the hermit did. The worldly desires Jerome has been exposed to in Rome mentally catch up with him and cause a constant inner struggle, which the saint vividly describes:

Quotiens in heremo constitutus et illa solitudine uasta que exusta solis ardoribus horridum monachis prestat habitaculum putauit me Romanis deliciis interesse; [...] cotidie lacrime, cotidie gemitus et si quando repugnantem sompnus imminens oppressisset, nuda humo uix ossa harentia collidebam. [...] Et cum scorpionum tantum essem socius et ferarum, sepe choris intereram puellarum et in frigido corpore et carne premortua sola libidinum incendia pullulabant. Itaque continue flebam et repugnantem carnem hebdomadarum inedia subigebam. [...] et mihi iratus et rigidus solus deserta penetrabam et ut mihi testis est dominus post multas lacrimas nonnunquam uidebatur mihi interesse agminibus angelorum.<sup>46</sup>

How many times, living in the wilderness, in the vast solitude that provides a horrid, sun-scorched abode to monks, have I thought that I was basking amid the delights of Rome! [...] Tears all day, groans all day—and

45 Ibidem XLVIII, 20–23 (vol. 1, 310).

46 Ibidem CXLII, 40–47 (vol. 2, 1004–1005).

if, resist it as I might, sleep overwhelmed me, my fleshless bones, hardly holding together, scraped against the bare ground. [...] All the company I had was scorpions and wild beasts, yet at times I felt myself surrounded by clusters of pretty girls, and the fires of lust were lighted in my frozen body and moribund flesh. So it was that I wept continually and starved the rebellious flesh for weeks at a time. [...] Angry and stern with myself I plunged alone, deeper and deeper, into the wasteland; and, as the Lord is my witness, from time to time and after many tears I seemed to be in the midst of throngs of angels.<sup>47</sup>

After four years, Jerome returns to Bethlehem where he lives at the Lord's crib and gathers a group of monks. In Jerome's and Benedict's *vita*, hermitism is staged as the most consequent step to leave the world behind and to begin a life exclusively dedicated to God. Notwithstanding, it is not the goal of spiritual development, but only an intermediary period of their path to religious truth and an accomplished life in a monastic community. Therefore, Thomas Aquinas's notion that solitude is a means to perfection can be exemplified in Jerome's and Benedict's life path.

### *Female Solitude and Penitence*

The connection of penitence and solitude introduced in the life of Jerome is the overarching idea of the accounts on female solitude. In the *Legenda aurea*, all women living in solitude have either chosen it out of remorse for their sinful, promiscuous way of life or accept it as a punishment for their (putative) deeds. Mary of Egypt (ch. 54) and Mary Magdalene (ch. 92) are the prototypes of these repentant sinners. Mary of Egypt spends her life naked, without any protection against nature's power ('nudo nigroque corpore et ex incendio solis exusto'<sup>48</sup>—'the body blackened and burned by the fiery sun'<sup>49</sup>). In the desert, she lives so afraid of people that she flees Zozimus, who has accidentally discovered her while crossing the Jordan. About her former life as a prostitute in Alexandria, the reader is only informed when she explains herself to the abbot. She is again an example of solitude as a divine gift since she simply followed a voice she had heard having prayed in front of the cross. After her death, her body does not decay and is buried by a lion, which is a common motif with the life of Paul of Thebes.

47 Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. 2, 213.

48 Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea* LIV, 2 (vol. 1, 374).

49 Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. 1, 227.

The *vita* of Mary Magdalene has obvious parallels to the one of Mary of Egypt as she also spends the end of her life in the solitude of a wilderness. Although the sins of Mary Magdalene's life before her encounter with the Lord are discussed in the beginning of the chapter, they are not mentioned when the saint decides to leave other men behind. It rather seems that she does not enter the desert to wash her sins away, but that she is privileged to do so because she has already reached a certain state of worthiness. In the end, her time in the wilderness is presented as a last reward to the *apostola apostolorum* after a life of preaching and teaching the word:

Interea beata Maria Magdalena superne contemplationis auida asper-  
rimam heremum petit et in loco angelicis manibus preparato per xxx  
annos incognita mansit. In quo quidem loco nec aquarum fluenta nec  
arborum nec herbarum erant solatia ut ex hoc manifestaretur quod re-  
demptor noster ipsam non terrenis refectionibus, sed tantum celestibus  
epulis disposuerat satiare. Qualibet autem die septem horis canonicis ab  
angelis in ethera eleuabatur et celestium agminum gloriosos concentus  
corporalibus etiam auribus audiebat; unde diebus singulis hiis suauissi-  
mis dapibus satiata et inde per eosdem angelos ad locum proprium reu-  
cata corporalibus alimentis nullatenus indigebat.<sup>50</sup>

At this time blessed Mary Magdalene, wishing to devote herself to heavenly contemplation, retired to an empty wilderness, and lived unknown for thirty years in a place made ready by the hands of angels. There were no streams of water there, nor the comfort of grass or trees: thus it was made clear that our Redeemer had determined to fill her not with earthly viands but only with the good things of heaven. Every day at the seven canonical hours she was carried aloft by angels and with her bodily ears heard the glorious chants of the celestial hosts. So, it was that day by day she was gratified with these supernal delights and, being conveyed back to her own place by the same angels, needed no material nourishment.<sup>51</sup>

Mary Magdalene's wilderness is described in opposition to solitary places characterised as *locus amoenus* in the lives of Paul and especially Giles. There is no water, no vegetation, and thus no nutrition. The wilderness is designed as a space where the chosen become independent of their body, where they are purified of the flesh already within this world, where they are prepared not for their further

<sup>50</sup> Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea* XCII, 130–133 (vol. 1, 636–637).

<sup>51</sup> Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. 1, 380.

monastic career, as were Jerome or Benedict, but for eternal salvation. However, the rhythm of Mary Magdalene's elevation is determined by the canonical hours so that it becomes possible to associate her solitude with the contemplative part of monastic life. In the life of the *apostola apostolorum* the Dominicans can recognise their own *vita mixta* based on contemplation and preaching, although they permanently alternate the two aspects while Mary Magdalene's life is clearly divided into a spiritual *vita activa* and a final *vita contemplativa* situated in an angelic space between heaven and earth.<sup>52</sup>

Pelagia (ch. 146) is another female sinner who undergoes a complete conversion. After her baptism, she resists a final temptation of the devil and decides to sell her possessions and to retreat to the Mount of Olives. There, she lived a life of strict abstinence in a small cell. As she was dressed as a hermit, people called the person who seemed to be a well-respected monk Brother Pelagius.<sup>53</sup> Her moderate hermit life that allowed for contact with the believers seems to be reserved solely for men. A woman has to disguise herself in order to pursue a hermitic life that does not lead to complete isolation. Thus, she is known with the male name Pelagius until her identity is revealed after her death.

While the female solitudes discussed so far are granted by the Lord, other female saints in the *Legenda aurea* who live a solitary life accept it as a sanction imposed by a religious authority. Furthermore, their lives in solitude are not linked to a remote wilderness, but the solitude is defined by an involuntary expulsion from communal human life. The courtesan Thais represents the concept of a recluse within the *Legenda aurea* (ch. 148). After Thais has recognised the sinfulness of her life and given all her possessions to the poor, Abbot Paphnutius locks her up in a narrow cell. Its door is sealed and only a small window is left open to provide some meagre nourishment.<sup>54</sup> The life of a recluse is not depicted as a privilege but clearly marked as punishment for Thais's former conduct. Finally, Paphnutius's treatment of Thais even receives a humiliating spin when he sharply commands her to relieve herself within her cell since she does not deserve any better in his view.<sup>55</sup> Being locked in, Thais meditates on her sins which she visualises in front of her eyes. When

52 For the transformations of Mary Magdalene in the Middle Ages cf. Apostolos-Cappadona D., "From *Apostola Apostolorum* to Provençal Evangelist: On the Evolution of a Medieval Motif for Mary Magdalene", in Loewen P.V. – Waugh R. (eds.), *Mary Magdalene in Medieval Culture*, Routledge Studies in Medieval Literature and Culture 4 (New York, NY – London 2014) 163–180 with further references.

53 Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea* CXLVI, 36–37 (vol. 2, 1035).

54 Ibidem CXLVIII, 24 (vol. 2, 1039).

55 Ibidem CXLVIII, 26–28 (vol. 2, 1039).

Paphnutius wants to release her as God has forgiven her, the saint refuses to leave her cell. She does not feel to be forgiven because the sins before her eyes have not yet vanished. Paphnutius explains that forgiveness has not been granted because of her acts of penance but due to her fear of God, which has always been part of her persona.<sup>56</sup> Apparently, her general disposition, of which Thais's penitence in solitude is only an outward sign, causes divine forgiveness.

Like Pelagia, Theodora (ch. 88), Margaret (ch. 147), and Marina (ch. 79) live disguised as men. Either to pay for their former sins (Theodora) or to find protection (Marina) or to keep their virginity (Margaret), they have joined a male monastery. The core of the three stories is formed by the obviously wrong accusation of having inseminated a woman. They do not deny the offence and accept their exclusion from the community. Margaret is confined in a remote cave, supplied only some bread and water,<sup>57</sup> while Marina has to stay outside the gate of the monastery living on a little bread,<sup>58</sup> and Theodora is expelled from the community, forced to live with the herd that provides milk for the baby.<sup>59</sup> This solitude is not a space of contemplation and purification. It is intended as a punishment, but includes the opportunity to prove one's obedience and forbearance. The honour of these saints is restored—even increased—after their death, as soon as their brethren recognise their sex and simultaneously their innocence. So these *vita* explore a negative solitude that is not venerated as the solitary life of the desert fathers and their successors. The idea of solitude as punishment and (temporal) exclusion of a community is, however, not exclusively female, although among the male saints of the *Legenda aurea* no one has to cope with a comparable situation. But Remigius can punish Genebald, his nephew in law, who has broken his vow to live in chastity, separated from his wife. Therefore, he wants to resign from the bishop's see of Laon but Remigius forbids him. Instead the saint locks him up in a cramped cell, meanwhile occupying Genebald's mitre himself.<sup>60</sup>

### Conclusion

The unfolded stories of saintly solitude illustrate how Jacobus de Voragine unites varying forms of the phenomenon within his *Legenda aurea*. The

<sup>56</sup> Ibidem CXLVIII, 32–46 (vol. 2, 1039–1040).

<sup>57</sup> Ibidem CXLVII, 10 (vol. 2, 1037).

<sup>58</sup> Ibidem LXXIX, 9 (vol. 1, 533).

<sup>59</sup> Ibidem LXXXVIII, 47 (vol. 1, 613).

<sup>60</sup> Ibidem XVI, 31 (vol. 1, 145).

reader meets desert fathers living as hermits and anchorites, in complete isolation or in constant exchange with brethren and believers. He learns about Western forms of a life in the wilderness, the expulsion of sinners from their community, and the life of a recluse. In accordance with Thomas Aquinas's theoretical view, solitude is presented as a divine gift, as a dangerous process of careful self-observation, and an exclusion from the community. The continuous ambiguity towards solitude can be exemplified by two episodes narrated in the chapters on abbot John (ch. 172) and abbot Arsenius (ch. 174). One day John wanted to become an angel. Therefore, he undressed, left the monastery, and spent a week fasting and in prayer. Nearly famished and stung by wasps and mosquitoes, he returned to the monastery. Only after having been rejected at the entrance, he realised the vanity of his behaviour to strive for a way of living in solitary prayer. This angelic life is in opposition to human nature that requires the comfort of a community and a shelter. However, the price to pay for this security is an obligation to labour and the integration into the community.

In an exemplum of the chapter on Arsenius, one monk demonstrates to two brethren how inner peace can be obtained. He pours water into a bowl. The water is at first troubled, but after a while it becomes calm and clear. The monk interprets this observation as a symbol of the benefits of a solitary life:

Sic qui in medio hominum consistit, pre turba non uidet peccata sua;  
cum autem quieuerit, tunc peccata sua uidere ualebit.<sup>61</sup>

So it is that those who live their lives among people do not see their own sins, but when they live in quiet, they are able to see them.<sup>62</sup>

Above all, solitude in the *Legenda aurea* is depicted in its intrinsic connection to monastic values: poverty, modesty, obedience, abstinence, and chastity. Especially in the chapters on the desert fathers, this concurrence of values is the key interest of the text rather than the characterisation of the desert or wilderness as space associated with solitude. Herein, one can indeed recognise that Jacobus de Voragine's concern with the desert fathers is rather due to the apostolic values they transmit than to the solitude that encloses them.

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61 Ibidem CLXXIV, 14–15 (vol. 2, 1232). This idea resembles Thais's meditation in her cell when the recluse sees her sins in front of her.

62 Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. 2, 352.

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# ‘Sacred Woods’: Performing Solitude at the Court of Duke Wilhelm v of Bavaria\*

*Christine Göttler*

## Introduction: A Hermit in the Schleissheim Forest

In the late summer of 1607 Archduke Ferdinand II of Inner Austria (1578–1637) and his wife Maria Anna of Bavaria (1574–1616) went with their entourage on a three-week visit to the Munich court of Duke Maximilian I of Bavaria (1573–1651). The two families were closely related: Maria Anna was Duke Maximilian’s sister, and Archduke Ferdinand, who would become Holy Roman Emperor in 1619, was her cousin as well as her husband; the couple had married in 1600.<sup>1</sup> In the same year, an account of that visit was published by one Johann Mayer who introduced himself as ‘German poet and citizen of Munich’ (*Teutschen Poeten und Burgern in München*).<sup>2</sup> Among the pleasures described in the account was an ‘exceedingly large banquet, attended by nineteen princely persons’, but much of it concentrates on other ‘pastimes and merrymaking’, such as attending ‘tragedies, fencing, hunting, [and] bird-shooting’ that ‘took place inside and outside the city’. More specifically, the events described by Mayer included a visit to the ducal residence with its Antiquarium and Kunstkammer,

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<sup>1</sup> Ferdinand’s mother was another Maria Anna of Bavaria (1551–1608), the sister of Duke Wilhelm v. The visit took place from 30 August to 22 September 1607.

<sup>2</sup> Mayer Johann, *Compendium, Das ist, Kurtzer Bericht wie der Durchleuchtigist Fürst [...] Maximilianus, Pfaltzgrave bey Rhein, Hertzog in Obern und Nidern Bayern etc. Ir Fürstlichen Durchl[aucht] Ertzhertzog von Grätz unnd Oesterreich [...] entgegen gezogen und in die Fürstl[iche] Hauptstat München den 30. Augusti Anno 1607 einbeleitet. Sambt kurtzer Erzehlung der uberauß grossen Pancket, darinn 19 Fürstenpersonen bey einander gewesen. Weiter wird angezeigt alle Kurtzweil und frewdenspiel, als Tragedi, Fechtschuelen, Geiaider, Vogelschiessen, so in und ausser der Statt seynd gehalten worden* (Munich, Adam Berg: 1607). Mayer’s *Compendium* is mentioned in Volk-Knüttel B., *Peter Candid (um 1548–1628): Gemälde, Zeichnungen, Druckgraphik* (Berlin: 2010) 66.

a trip on lake Starnberg, and the guests' attendance of the first performance of Jakob Bidermann's tragicomedy on the rise and fall of *Belisarius* (general of the Byzantine emperor Justinian) at the Jesuit College.<sup>3</sup>

Now, where does solitude emerge from this hustle and bustle of entertainment at court? In regard to the focus of this volume, Mayer's description of the royal party's three-day journey to the 'wilderness' of Schleissheim, the traditional hunting ground of the Wittelsbach dukes, is of particular interest. Duke Wilhelm V (1548–1626), the father-in-law of Archduke Ferdinand II, had recently built his retirement seat in this area, consisting of a large estate with a manor house and a chapel (dedicated to his patron saint, St. William of Malavalle), and eight other chapels with hermitages surrounding the central complex like a garland or chain. Because of his precarious financial situation, Wilhelm V had abdicated in favour of his eldest son, Maximilian I, in February 1598.<sup>4</sup> After his abdication, Duke Wilhelm still served as a counsellor to his son and successor, but most of his activities were dedicated to religious issues and collecting. As part of this transition he shifted his well-documented interests in landscapes and gardens to the realm of religion.<sup>5</sup> The chapels and their hermitages at Schleissheim were part of a larger project initiated by the retired duke to restore and revive the imagery and cultural memory of solitude within an explicitly dynastic and Counter-Reformation context. As shall be shown, the project aimed simultaneously at religious renewal, agricultural reform, and the securing of territorial and political claims. The transformation of Schleissheim into a 'sacred landscape' went hand in hand with the transformation of the site's natural resources into Wittelsbach wealth. Like his attempts to accumulate relics from both Protestant lands and the foreign missions (where new

3 See Rädle F., "Jesuit Theatre in Germany, Austria and Switzerland", in Bloemendaal J. – Norland H.B. (eds.), *Neo-Latin Drama in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden – Boston, MA: 2013) 185–292, at 277; Burger H., *Jakob Bidermanns "Belisarius": Edition und Versuch einer Deutung*, Quellen und Forschungen zur Sprach- und Kulturgeschichte der germanischen Völker, n.s. 19 (143) (Berlin: 1977).

4 See Appl T., *Die Kirchenpolitik Herzog Wilhelms V. von Bayern: Der Ausbau der bayerischen Hauptstädte zu geistlichen Zentren*, Schriftenreihe zur Bayerischen Landesgeschichte 162 (Munich: 2011) 28–30; Maxwell S., *The Court Art of Friedrich Sustris: Patronage in Late Renaissance Bavaria* (Farnham, Surrey: 2011) 4–7.

5 For Wilhelm's passion for animals and the natural world, see Maxwell S., "Every Living Beast: Collecting Animals and Art in Early Modern Munich", in Cuneo P. (ed.), *Animals and Early Modern Identity* (Farnham, Surrey: 2014) 45–66; Herrin A.K., "Pioneers of the Printed Paradise: Maarten de Vos, Jan Sadeler I and Emblematic Natural History of the Printed Paradise in the Late 16th Century", in Enenkel K.A.E – Smith P.J. (eds.), *Zoology in Early Modern Culture: Intersections of Science, Theology, Philology, and Political and Religious Education*, *Intersections* 32 (Leiden – Boston, MA: 2014) 329–400.

relics had become available), his efforts in reviving old anachoretic traditions may be seen as an indication of his aspiration to turn the Bavarian Wittelsbach court into a new world centre of Catholicism.<sup>6</sup>

Mayer introduces his description of the ducal party's journey to Schleissheim by imagining himself lost in a forest clearing—a *locus amoenus*—surrounded by huge firs; there he encounters a huntsman who presents himself as Cadmus who killed the great serpent. Cadmus tells him that he has ended up in the sacred grove where Diana used to bathe with her nymphs and where the unfortunate Actaeon (Cadmus's grandson) was transformed into a stag, as a punishment for seeing the goddess naked. Led out of the 'wilderness' ('Wildtnus') by the same Cadmus the narrator encounters an old hermit, 'as there were thousands of them in Egypt', who announces to him the arrival of the ducal party.<sup>7</sup> In Mayer's account the wilderness of Schleissheim is imagined as a heterotopic space.<sup>8</sup> The actual space is overlaid by imaginary spaces of either physical or spiritual transformation—the forest of the hunters Cadmus, Actaeon, and the goddess Diana and the desert of the Egyptian fathers. As Jacques Le Goff has observed, in the medieval West the forest took on some of the features of the Syrian or Egyptian deserts. Like the desert the forest was imagined as a place of marvels,<sup>9</sup> an aspect further elaborated in Mayer's description of the chapels at Schleissheim.

Once joined by the narrator the ducal families continue their journey by visiting the chapel of Our Lady, identified by Mayer as the place of the spectacular conversion of St. Bruno, the founder of the Carthusian Order, to an ascetic life, an event dramatised by Bidermann in the *Cenodoxus* of 1602 and thus well-known to our illustrious group. All the other chapels are primarily described for their sacred automata. Mayer further mentions the rabbit gardens and the turtle ponds near the chapels of St. Francis and Ignatius. There was a glass house near the chapel of St. Margaret that evidently made use of the timber in

6 On Wilhelm's search for relics from Protestant areas, see most recently: Smith J.C., "Salvaging Saints: The Rescue and Display of Relics in Munich during the Early Catholic Reformation", in Chieffo Raguin V. (ed.), *Art, Piety and Destruction in the Christian West, 1500–1700* (Farnham, Surrey: 2010) 1–43. See also Laube S., *Von der Relique zum Ding: Heiliger Ort—Wunderkammer—Museum* (Berlin: 2012) 194–196.

7 Mayer, *Compendium*, fol. E1a.

8 Michel Foucault's 1967 lecture "Des espaces autres" was first published in *Architecture / Mouvement / Continuité* 5 (October 1984) 46–49 (English translation: "Different Spaces", in Faubion J.D. (ed.), *Aesthetic, Method, and Epistemology: Essential Works of Foucault* (London: 1975), vol. 2, 175–185).

9 Le Goff J., *L'Imaginaire médiéval: Essais* (Paris: 1985) 59–75 ("Le désert-forêt dans l'Occident médiéval"), at 67.

the nearby forests. The visit ends at the St. William of Malavalle chapel in the residence itself, forming the centre of the complex of chapels and hermitages.<sup>10</sup> In the evening, a lavish banquet was held, and, the following day, a hunt.

### Making Gold, Producing Cheese, Performing Prayer: Religious, Agricultural, and Economic Reform at Schleissheim

The Lutheran merchant and art agent Philipp Hainhofer of Augsburg (1578–1647) provides us with the most closely observed account of the no longer extant chapels and hermitages at Schleissheim in the itinerary or ‘relation’ of his stay in Munich in May 1611. Hainhofer rode out to Schleissheim in the middle of the morning of 26 May 1611, after having met with Duke Wilhelm in his new city residence (the ‘Wilhelminische Veste’ or Herzog Maxburg) at daybreak. The Veste was built with the explicit purpose of accommodating the duke after his withdrawal from affairs of state.<sup>11</sup> Begun in the early 1590s, most of the buildings were completed by July 1596 so that Wilhelm v and his spouse Renata of Lorraine (1544–1602) could move in. A passageway connected Duke Wilhelm’s new residence with his oratory in the Jesuit church to the south-east of the complex, reflecting his engagement in the Jesuit project of the conversion of souls, both in his own territory and abroad.<sup>12</sup> Hainhofer relates that the duke had opened to him several rooms including the pharmacy where he showed him the unicorn and rhinoceros horns. He then explicitly asked him to travel to Schleissheim to see the chapels and also instructed him about their significance—although Hainhofer’s account gives no further detail.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Mayer, *Compendium*, fols. E1a–E3b.

<sup>11</sup> For the ‘Wilhelminische Veste’, see Burger D., ‘Die Herzog-Maxburg: Ein verschwundener Renaissancepalast in München’, in Wartburg-Gesellschaft zur Erforschung von Burgen und Schlössern (ed.), *Die Burg zur Zeit der Renaissance*, Forschungen zu Burgen und Schlössern 13 (Berlin: 2010) 151–168; Appl, *Die Kirchenpolitik* 130–134.

<sup>12</sup> On the passageway that joined Wilhelm’s oratory in St. Michael’s with his residence, see also Smith J.C., *Sensuous Worship: Jesuits and the Art of the Early Catholic Reformation in Germany* (Princeton, NJ: 2002) 57.

<sup>13</sup> In the following, I use the critical edition of the text by Langenkamp A., *Philipp Hainhofs Münchner Reisebeschreibungen: Eine kritische Ausgabe*, Ph.D. dissertation (Technische Universität Berlin: 1990) 137–222 (“Relatio über Philippi Hainhofs, burgers zu Augspurg, raiß von Eystet nach München, anno 1611”), at 188 (fol. 171r–v). For an older edition, see Häutle C. (ed.), ‘Die Reisen des Augsburgers Philipp Hainhofer nach Eichstätt, München und Regensburg in den Jahren 1611, 1612 und 1613’, *Zeitschrift des Historischen Vereins für Schwaben und Neuburg* 8 (1881) 55–148 (“Volgt die Relation vber Philippi Hainhoffers,

Construction at Schleissheim began in 1597. The property acquired by the duke included several *Schwaighöfe* (settlements for animal husbandry and dairy farming) that continued to operate under the new management.<sup>14</sup> Hainhofer, who was shown around by the administrator, describes in considerable detail the princely residence with its three large farmsteads (each with its own artificial brook to secure the supply of water), its mills, various stables, water house, brewery, bakery, seed store, milking parlour, two cheese dairies, four beer cellars, poultry house, and dove cote [Fig. 5.1].<sup>15</sup> The animals kept at the farm included heifers, sheep, goats, oxen, pigs, and horses. In addition, there were peacocks, 'Indian' poultry, 'Turkish' poultry (these two perhaps turkeys and guinea fowl?), and 'Bohemian' poultry as well as rabbits, which had their burrows between the chapels of St. Francis and Ignatius. The estate was known for the production of 'Weizenbier' (beer brewed from wheat) and, most especially, of cheese including sheep's cheese and cheeses of the Parmesan and Swiss types.<sup>16</sup>

The duke's rooms in the manor house prepared visitors for a religious 'wilderness' experience. Hainhofer noted that the walls of most of the rooms were hung with black tapestries or draperies except those of the guests which had green ones, and that antlers or religious paintings were their sole decoration. At the time of Hainhofer's visit, the central two-storied chapel of St. William of Malavalle in the ducal residence had two private oratories, one for Wilhelm, the other for his by then deceased spouse Renata of Lorraine [Fig. 5.2].<sup>17</sup> There were two gardens in the grounds of the residence: 'a large flower and herb garden' in part of which a hermit tended his own small garden and hermitage (in other words the hermitage belonging to the chapel of St. William of Malavalle); and 'a small and enclosed garden' with 'a laboratory or distillery', in which 'also gold had been made'.<sup>18</sup>

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Burgers zue Augspurg Raiss von Eystett nacher München im Mayo Anno 1611 verrichtet"), at 118.

<sup>14</sup> For Bavarian *Schwaighöfe*, see Toch M., "Lords and Peasants: A Reappraisal of Medieval Economic Relationships", *The Journal of European Economic History* 15, 1 (1986) 163–182, esp. 171–173.

<sup>15</sup> See, for the following: Langenkamp, *Philipp Hainhofers Münchner Reisebeschreibungen* 196–199 ("Relatio", fols. 182v–185v); Schmid E.D., *Schloss Schleissheim: Die barocke Residenz mit Altem Schloss und Schloss Lustheim* (Munich: 1980) 22–36; Klingensmith S.J., *The Utility of Splendor: Ceremony, Social Life, and Architecture at the Court of Bavaria, 1600–1800* (Chicago, IL – London: 1993) 68–70.

<sup>16</sup> Langenkamp, *Philipp Hainhofers Münchner Reisebeschreibungen* 198 ("Relatio", fol. 184v).

<sup>17</sup> Ibidem 196 ("Relatio", fols. 181v–182r); Vignau-Wilberg T. (ed.), *Citizens of Europe: Dutch and Flemish Artists in Munich, c. 1600*, exh. cat., Neue Pinakothek (Munich: 2005) 374–376.

<sup>18</sup> Langenkamp, *Philipp Hainhofers Münchner Reisebeschreibungen* 197 ("Relatio", fol. 183r): 'Es hat ain schönen, grossen blum- und kräutlgarten, darinen hat der claußner ein klein

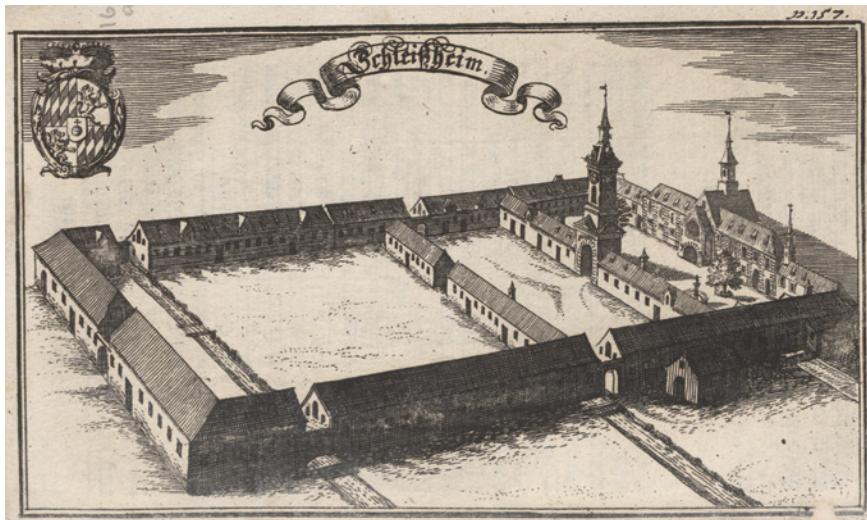


FIGURE 5.1 Johann Ulrich Kraus (engraver), Plate 42, "Alt-Schleissheim", in Anton Wilhelm Ertl, Chur- Bayerischer Atlas [...] (Nuremberg, Peter Paul Bleul: 1687). Engraving, 8.2 x 14.2 cm. Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek (Bavar. 759-1).  
IMAGE © BAYERISCHE STAATSBIBLIOTHEK, MUNICH.



FIGURE 5.2 Detail of Fig. 5.1: The chapel of St. William.

The proximity of the hermitage (as a site of spiritual transformation) and the laboratory (as a site of material transformation)—both ‘secret’ places—points to the close relationship between religious conversion and the manipulation of the natural world. Given the enormous debts inherited by Wilhelm v and further accrued during his reign, his frequent recourse to alchemy and, especially, to gold making is not surprising. As Tara Nummedal has shown, Wilhelm v was certainly not the only ruler hoping to generate wealth through alchemy (or mining) and thus to find a solution to the constant financial shortfall at court.<sup>19</sup> In 1590, at the height of the financial crisis, Duke Wilhelm had invited to his court the alchemist Marco Bragadino who claimed to have found the secret of producing gold. His failure to achieve any transmutation led to his arrest at the demand of the Bavarian estates and, eventually, to his beheading on 26 April 1591.<sup>20</sup>

Duke Wilhelm’s decision to make his patron saint William of Malavalle the central reference figure of the whole complex reveals his personal investment in the project. Born into the French nobility, William spent a dissolute youth as a soldier, but eventually experienced a dramatic conversion to faith. He embarked on pilgrimages to Santiago de Compostela, Rome, and the Holy Land, and, as an act of penance, placed a suit of chainmail next to his flesh, wearing it permanently underneath his penitential robe; he also always wore a helmet. Upon his return he became a hermit and finally settled in a wasteland (‘mala valle’) near Grosseto where he founded a small hermit community. After his cult received papal confirmation in 1202, the congregation began to expand throughout Italy and also north of the Alps.<sup>21</sup>

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gärtlin und sein clause. Vor den fürstlichen zimmern und fenstern auf der erden ist wider ain klain, eingefastes gärtlin, das man nit für die fenster kan sechen und hören reden, darbei ain laboratorium, brenn- oder distillierhauß, in welchem man auch gold gemacht hat und gesagt: Calcino, sublimo, tero, coagulo figo, haec est ars tota a stultis remota.

19 Nummedal T., *Alchemy and Authority in the Holy Roman Empire* (Chicago, IL: 2007) 16, 173.

20 For Bragadino, see Striedinger I., *Der Goldmacher Bragadino: Archivkundliche Studie zur Kulturgeschichte des 16. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: 1928); Bauer O., *Zeitungen vor der Zeitung: Die Fuggerzeitungen (1568–1605) und das frühmoderne Nachrichtensystem*, *Colloquia Augustana* 28 (Berlin: 2011) 254–261. For Wilhelm’s frequent contacts with alchemists, see Kühlmann W. – Telle J. (eds.), *Der Frühparacelsismus*, 3 vols., *Corpus Paracelsisticum* 1–3 (Tübingen: 2001–2013), vol. 2, 390–400, no. 59.

21 Schütz L. – Kaster K.G., “Wilhelm (Guilielmus) von Maleval (der Große)”, in Braunfels W. (ed.), *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*, vol. 8 (Freiburg im Breisgau: 1976) 607–612; Mottironi S., “Guglielmo il Grande, o di Malavalle”, in *Bibliotheca sanctorum*, vol. 7 (Rome: 1966) 471–472; Elm K., “Wilhelm v. Malavalle”, in Höfer J. – Rahner K. (eds.), *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, vol. 10 (Freiburg im Breisgau: 1965) 1137; idem, “Der Wilhelmitenorden: Eine geistliche Gemeinschaft zwischen Eremitenleben, Mönchtum

The large painting in the chapel by Peter Candid (ca. 1548–1628), court painter to the Wittelsbach dukes, shows the saint kneeling in front of a cave experiencing a vision of the Virgin and the Christ Child [Fig. 5.3]. Candid depicted him wearing his chainmail shirt under his hermit's habit; his helmet and weapons have been placed on the ground.<sup>22</sup> Wilhelm v is presented as St. William's true successor who, like the twelfth-century hermit, did penance for his early sins and transformed a wasteland into an agriculturally productive 'sacred' landscape. Partially based on already existing chapels, the other eight chapels and their hermitages were made of wood. Considerable care was taken to measure the distance between the individual chapels located 'scarcely a stone's throw' from one another. They were inhabited by clerics or lay brothers—Carthusians, Franciscans, and Jesuits—who were required to perform prayer and manual labour.<sup>23</sup> All the chapels had elaborate fountains or were furnished with automata that enacted sacred scenes. Like Mayer, Hainhofer was particularly taken by the hydraulic and pneumatic machines and probably had Mayer's *Compendium* with him when visiting and writing about the chapels, since he described them in exactly the same order.<sup>24</sup>

### Clockworks, Organs, and Water Jets: The Automata of the Schleissheim Chapels

The fact that no or little trace has been left of these unique machines justifies a more detailed description, based primarily on Hainhofer's account. Whereas no automata or "living machines" are documented for the chapel of Our Lady,

und Mendikantenarmut", in Elm K., *Vitasfratum: Beiträge zur Geschichte der Eremiten- und Mendikantenorden des zwölften und dreizehnten Jahrhunderts*, ed. D. Berg (Werl: 1994) 55–66; idem, "Wilhelmiten", *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, vol. 9 (Munich: 1998) 197–198; Braun J., *Tracht und Attribute der Heiligen in der deutschen Kunst* (Stuttgart: 1943) 749–752. See also Bollandus J. – Henschenius G., *Acta Sanctorum* (Februarius, tomus II) (Antwerp: Jacobus Meursius, 1658) 433–493.

<sup>22</sup> Volk-Knöttel, *Peter Candid* 151–152, cat. G 26.

<sup>23</sup> Their tasks are summarised in a period description: 'The individual hermits maintain their chapels; they have a cell, a garden, and a well. They spin and wind (wool), paint, melt and bleach wax': Milensis Felix, *Alphabetum de monachis e monasteriis Germaniae ac Sarmatiae citerioris Ordinis Eremitarum Sancti Augustini* (Prague, Brechtanus: 1613) 267: 'Custodiunt singuli eremita sacella sua; habent singuli cellulam, hortulum, puteolum; nent, glomerant, pingunt, caeras liquant et candidant'.

<sup>24</sup> See, for the following: Langenkamp, *Philipp Hainhofers Münchner Reisebeschreibungen* 189–196 ("Relatio", fols. 175v–182v); Vignau-Wilberg, *Citizens of Europe* 375–376; Schmid, *Schloss Schleissheim* 33–36. See also Maxwell, *The Court Art of Friedrich Sustris* 198–200.



FIGURE 5.3 *Peter Candid, Vision of St. William of Malavalle (ca. 1600). Oil on canvas, 306.5 × 174.5 cm. Munich, Bayerische Verwaltung der staatlichen Schlösser, Gärten und Seen, Nymphenburg, Marstalldepot (inv. no. SAS-G-0001).*

IMAGE © BAYERISCHE VERWALTUNG DER STAATLICHEN SCHLÖSSER, GÄRTEN UND SEEN, MUNICH.

the second chapel, dedicated to St. Corbinian, bishop of Freising, had an organ of wooden pipes masked as wax candles, that could be made to sound by means of a bellows. Behind the chapel was a roofed well; its column was crowned with a large glass ball perforated with many holes from which water spouted as if it were raining.<sup>25</sup> The cupola of the St. Margaret chapel contained a figure of the Archangel Michael surrounded by two circles of clouds intermingled with angels, set in motion by a concealed clockwork mechanism.<sup>26</sup>

The two largest chapels were dedicated to St. Francis and Ignatius, the old and new proponents of meditation and retreat. At the St. Francis chapel there were two “living images” of the saint, one driven mechanically, and the other hydraulically. Inside the chapel there was a life-size figure in the round, arms outstretched toward Christ from whose wounds blood (represented by red thread) spurted out towards the saint. Another figure was set up outside in front of a tree, displaying the stigmata from which flowed water which allegedly had healing powers, especially for ailments of the eyes; water also rained down from the tree’s branches.<sup>27</sup> Consecrated in the Jubilee Year of 1600, the Ignatius chapel was designed to support the campaign to canonise the founder of the Society of Jesus.<sup>28</sup> The altarpiece depicts Ignatius, shown with a shining halo, experiencing the vision at La Storta, an event that played a significant role in the foundation and naming of the Society of Jesus in 1540 [Fig. 5.4].<sup>29</sup> Given the reverence Duke Wilhelm showed toward the Society’s founder, the painting could well have been set up above the altar before 1609, the year of Ignatius’s beatification. The less distinct halo around Francis Xavier’s head could have been added later in the painting’s history. In the garden were a Mount Calvary with bronze figures of Christ and the two thieves on their crosses, and a complex, hydraulically operated machine consisting of a pile of wood that spouted a jet of water, with a large ball floating on top of the fountain. According to Hainhofer, the water signified the Flood (the destruction of mankind by water), and the wood symbolised the Last Judgement (the destruction of the world by fire). Referring to the Passion of Christ and the

<sup>25</sup> Langenkamp, *Philipp Hainhofers Münchner Reisebeschreibungen* 191 (“Relatio”, fol. 177v).

<sup>26</sup> Ibidem 191–192 (“Relatio”, fols. 177v–178r).

<sup>27</sup> Ibidem 192 (“Relatio”, fol. 178r–v).

<sup>28</sup> Ibidem 192–193 (“Relatio”, fols. 178v–179r). On Wilhelm v and the Jesuits: Glaser H., “*Nadie sin fructo: Die bayerischen Herzöge und die Jesuiten im 16. Jahrhundert*”, in Baumstark R. (ed.), *Rom in Bayern: Kunst und Spiritualität der ersten Jesuiten*, exh. cat., Bayerisches Nationalmuseum (Munich: 1997) 55–82, esp. 70–80.

<sup>29</sup> Baumstark R., “*Die Vision von La Storta*”, in Baumstark, *Rom in Bayern* 319–320, cat. 32.



FIGURE 5.4 *Anon. painter, The Vision of La Storta (1611). Oil on canvas, 182.5 × 132 cm. Munich, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen (inv. no. 10212).*

IMAGE © BPK/BAYERISCHE STAATSGEMÄLDESAMMLUNGEN, MUNICH.

Last Things, the artefacts and installations thus engaged with the two central subjects of (Jesuit) meditation.

Wilhelm v had built the chapel dedicated to St. Renatus, a fifth-century bishop of Angers, in remembrance of his deceased wife Renata of Lorraine. It was located to the east of the St. William chapel and clearly visible from it.<sup>30</sup> Like the St. Margaret chapel, the chapels of both St. Nikolas and St. Jacob already existed, but Wilhelm v had them renovated and furnished with mechanical devices. Sounds emanated from a horn hidden in the tower of St. Nikolas. Hainhofer further mentions two angels, one holding a crosier, the other juggling with two balls to the sounds of the horn.<sup>31</sup> There was a hidden mechanism behind the main altar of the St. Jacob chapel by means of which the three altarpieces that had been made for it could be alternated.<sup>32</sup>

Hainhofer also informs us about the fathers and friars living in the nearby hermitages according to specified conditions and rules. Wilhelm v had carefully chosen religious orders with a penchant for austerity and contemplative prayer: Carthusians, Capuchins, Augustinian Hermits, and Jesuits. The hermitages appended to the chapels of Our Lady and of St. Corbinian were each inhabited by a Carthusian. Those belonging to the St. Francis and the Ignatius chapels offered housing for six Capuchin friars and six Jesuit fathers, respectively. The hermitages of the already existing chapels of St. Margaret, St. Nikolas, and St. Jacob were all three tended by individual hermits ('Klausner'). The hospice adjacent to the St. Renatus chapel included a garden with three fishponds, a well, a cemetery, and a place for bleaching wax. Spacious enough to accommodate four people, it was in fact occupied only by an Augustinian friar and an Augustinian priest. The latter was required to say mass daily, and each day in a different chapel, visiting them in turn. The pleasant rural setting adjacent to a forest is rendered in an engraving in Felice Milensio's treatise *Alphabetum de monachis e monasteriis Germaniae ac Sarmatiae citerioris Ordinis Eremitarum Sancti Augustini* (*Alphabet of the Monks and Monasteries of the Order of the Augustinian Hermits of Germany and Eastern Europe*), published in 1613 [Fig. 5.5].<sup>33</sup> Finally, Hainhofer also mentions that near the St. Francis and the Ignatius chapels there were extensive lawns with ponds

30 Langenkamp, *Philipp Hainhofers Münchner Reisebeschreibungen* 193 ("Relatio", fol. 179r–v).

31 Ibidem 193 ("Relatio", fol. 179v).

32 Wilhelm v was a fervent promoter of this much-criticised saint. The first treatise on the miracles of St. Benno appeared in 1601, the year the church was renovated: Smith, "Salvaging Saints" 34–37.

33 Milensius, *Alphabetum de monachis e monasteriis* 267–268.



FIGURE 5.5 *Anon. engraver, Chapel of St. Renatus, in Felix Milensis, Alphabetum de monachis e monasteriis Germaniae ac Sarmatiae citerioris (Prague, Caspar Kargesius: 1613) 269. Engraving, 15.6 x 11.2 cm. Ghent, University Library (BIB.HIST.009165).*  
IMAGE © UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, GHENT.

that could easily accommodate large dinner parties; there were even frames on which tapestries could be hung.

At the turn of the seventeenth century, waterworks and hydraulic devices were frequently found in gardens belonging to the wealthy elite.<sup>34</sup> The chapels and hermitages at Schleissheim are, however, noteworthy in that they linked and hybridised the realms of religion and leisure, the church and the garden, and the miraculous and mundane. Furnished with automata that re-enacted miraculous scenes or supernatural mysteries, these courtly settings may be considered as architectural *mises en scène* generating the intense emotions that appealed to the religious imagination of a courtly elite. At Schleissheim 'solitude' was theatrically staged and in fact became a societal experience.

34 Riskin J., "Machines in the Garden", in Biagioli M. – Riskin J. (eds.), *Nature Engaged: Science in Practice from the Renaissance to the Present* (New York, NY: 2012) 229–248.

A central, but often overlooked element in Duke Wilhelm's plan of reforming and transforming the Schleissheim landscape into an (almost) utopian space of agricultural prosperity and religious perfection was the supply of water both for agricultural purposes and for the fountains in the chapels. The first plans for the construction of the 'Old Würmkanal', channelling water from the Würm and the Moosach through the Dachauer Moos to Schleissheim, were made as early as 1601; the 'Old Würmkanal' is the oldest part of a gigantic canal system completed under Elector Max Emmanuel between 1687 and 1728 that connected the Munich residence with the castles in Nymphenburg, Dachau, and Schleissheim. But even by the beginning of the seventeenth century the diversion of water had already made a considerable impact on the natural water balance, which led to a steady increase in complaints by farmers and millers affected by water shortage or flooding; most of these protests were ignored.<sup>35</sup> Conversely, considerable efforts were undertaken to run the ingenious devices of the fountains set up near the hermitages and in the chapels. The spectacles enacted by the automata connected Wilhelm's estate at Schleissheim with settings and gardens of other Catholic monarchs favouring three-dimensional and animated representations of religious scenes. As a whole, the chapels with hermitages suggested a reading of the landscape that involved their organisation along agricultural, religious, and social lines.

### A Wilderness in the City Residence

The chapels and hermitages surrounding Duke Wilhelm's manor house at Schleissheim found their counterpart in what was known as the 'grotta' of the 'Wilhelminische Veste'. In 1603, during his first visit to the Munich residence, Hainhofer noted that Duke Wilhelm had begun to build 'a grotta [...] below the earth's surface' where he planned to plant various trees, accommodate birds and animals, and also house a hermit.<sup>36</sup> The 'grotta's' exact location is

35 Ongyerth G., "400 Jahre Schleißheimer Kanalsystem: Topographie, Verfall und Revitalisierungsansatz für ein gemeindeübergreifendes Baudenkmal zwischen Dachau, Oberschleißheim und München", *Jahrbuch der bayerischen Denkmalpflege: Forschungen und Berichte* 49/53, 1995/1999 (2005) 139–161, at 140–141.

36 I cite from Langenkamp, *Philipp Hainhofers Münchner Reisebeschreibungen* 144, note 8: ' [...] und last ihn jezt aine grotta [...] under der erden bawen, darein allerlai bäum sezen, willens vögel und thier dari zu thun und drunder zu wohnen tanquam eremita [...] '.

indicated by the huge fir trees visible in a view of the Veste in Michael Wening's *Historico-topographica descriptio* of 1701 [Fig. 5.6]. In the text, the place is described as being of fairly large size and known as 'Einöde' (desert, solitude), 'because of its huge fir, chestnut and other trees and its hermitage made of "grotto-work"'.<sup>37</sup> The residential apartments of the manor house were on the upper floor of the south wing (the building in the front of Wening's engraving) with its stately façade of 120 metres. It is assumed that Duke Wilhelm inhabited the rooms in the east end of the south wing that looked toward the 'grotta'.<sup>38</sup> According to Hainhofer, they were 'painted grotto-like and wilderness-like' ('grotten- und wildnußweis gemahlet') and were decorated with portraits of St. Francis; some of their walls were hung with tapestries of straw.<sup>39</sup>

The most instructive description of the 'grotta' is again by Hainhofer; he was led into it before being shown the more prestigious and also more 'public' spaces of the Munich residence. Hainhofer was well aware that in his case, given his Lutheran beliefs, access to the 'grotta', which remained 'always locked', was a very special favour granted him by Duke Wilhelm.<sup>40</sup> According to Hainhofer, the 'grotta' consisted of natural rock with monks' cells hewn into it and an altar also carved out of natural rock.<sup>41</sup> The terrain was planted with fir trees and other wild trees, brought there by ship and replanted into the new ground. Water gushed out of the rock, forming a little brook and pond with trout swimming in it, which also contained life-sized lead casts of snakes, lizards, toads, and crabs. The furnishings were all made of bark, straw, twigs, and sticks, including the twelve small chairs arranged in the loggia above the water. Hainhofer explicitly states that the chairs were moved there to accommodate 'princely guests' such as the above-mentioned Archduke Ferdinand II during his 1607 visit. While designed as a place of prayer and meditation, the 'grotta' nonetheless also served social purposes.

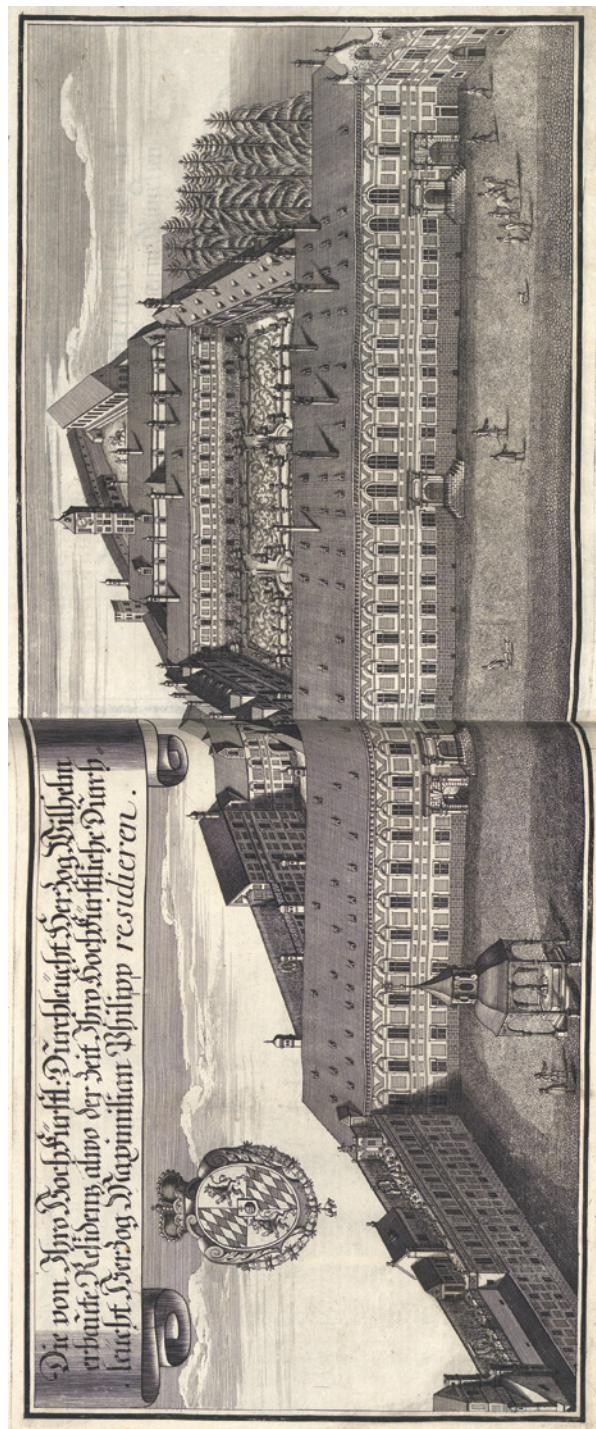
37 Michael Wening, *Historico-topographica descriptio. Das ist: Beschreibung deß Churfürsten- und Herzogthums Ober- und Nidern Bayrn*, vol. 1 (Munich, Johann Lucas Straub: 1701) 11: '[...] die in zimblicher Grösse auff der andern Seyten dises Gangs stehende Einöde, so wegen der hohen Tannen, Kastanien und andern Bäumen, dann von Grottenwerck gemachten Clausen also den Namen führet'.

38 Burger, "Die Herzog-Maxburg" 161.

39 Langenkamp, *Philipp Hainhofers Münchner Reisebeschreibungen*, 142–143 ("Relatio", fol. 119r–v): 'In ihrer D zimmer hangen etliche täfelchen von miniatur und etlich grosse tafeln von öhlfarben, die mauren sein grotten- und wildnußweis gemahlet mit St Francisco; etlich zimmer mit stroinen tappezereien behengt'.

40 Appl, *Die Kirchenpolitik* 53–54.

41 For the following, see Annex 1.



Die von Hrvo Hochfürstl: Durchleucht: Herzog Wilhelm  
erhöht Reichs: ohne der Art. Hrvo Hochfürstl: Durch-  
leucht: Herzog Maximilian Philipp residieren.

FIGURE 5.6 Michael Wening (engraver), *The Wilhelminische Veste*, from *Historico-topographica descriptio*. Das ist: Beschreibung des Churfürsten- und Herzogthums Ober- und Niderm Bayrn (Munich, Johann Lucas Straub, 1701). Engraving, 27 x 68,5 cm. Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek (Hbks/F 18-1).

IMAGE © BAYERISCHE STAATSbibliothek, MUNICH.

The 'grotta' contained a small stove for the winter, and on the wall there was a fresco showing St. Francis in the wilderness. Hainhofer further mentions a tree with a stopper in it; when the stopper was removed, a view of the tower with its clock was revealed showing the time. Hainhofer emphasises the 'gloomy, melancholic, devout, and fearful' aspects of the 'grotta', and also reflects on the possible 'lange weile' or tedium experienced by the two Carthusians required to perform prayers at this closed-off site—an emotion or mood closely related to melancholy and fear. It is significant that Hainhofer showed concern that an extended stay in such a dark dwelling could cause melancholy. As a Lutheran he must have been well aware of Luther's fierce rejection of both eremitism and monasticism and his polemical equation of the place of solitude (*locus solitudinis*) with the place of sin (*locus peccati*). Challenging long-held views about religiously motivated retreat into the solitude of the outer or inner desert, Luther proposed marriage, sociability, and, in certain exceptional cases, good eating and drinking, as effective remedies against melancholy and sinful desires.<sup>42</sup>

Hainhofer uses the phrase 'wildachtigen construction' to comment on the aesthetic allure of the space.<sup>43</sup> In Plantin's Flemish-French-Latin dictionary of 1573 the Flemish word 'wildachtig' is translated as 'subagrestis', thus something untamed, crude, or unrefined. 'Wildachtig' has a similar meaning to 'grottenweis' or 'wildnußweis' and seems to define a 'rustic' style appropriate for grottoes and gardens as well as interiors transformed into outdoor sites. Finally, Hainhofer compares the composition of the 'grotta' to that of the 'paintings and copperplate engravings' depicting 'priests and hermits', undoubtedly an allusion to the engraved series of hermit saints by the Sadeler brothers Jan I and Raphael I and their many copies and adaptations.<sup>44</sup>

The artificial 'desert', 'forest', or 'solitude' known as the 'grotta' in Wilhelm's new residence was doubtless a response to the 'grotto courtyard' ('Grottenhof'),

<sup>42</sup> Martin Luther, *Tischreden Oder Colloquia*, ed. Johann Aurifaber (Eisleben, Urban Gaubisch: 1566), fols. 319r, 329v, 330r.

<sup>43</sup> For the meaning of 'wildachtig' see Plantin Christophe, *Thesaurus Theutonicae linguae: Schat der Neder-duytscher spraken* (Antwerp, Christophe Plantin: 1573): 'wildachtich. Aucunement sauvage. Subagrestis'.

<sup>44</sup> Langenkamp, *Philipp Hainhofer's Münchner Reisebeschreibungen* 145 ("Relatio", fol. 121v): '[...] und ist alle dise grotta zusamen gemacht, alß wie man in den gemählten und kupferstucken die patres und eremitas abconterfeet sihet'. An extensive series of hermit images painted on vellum and dated ca. 1600 has been preserved at the Munich residence: Vignau-Wilberg, *Citizens of Europe* 394–397, nos. F17–F18.

commissioned by Wilhelm v at an earlier stage of his reign. As Susan Maxwell has shown, the 'grotto courtyard' offered a new, religious interpretation of Ovidian mythology, in which the processes of metamorphosis and conversion are interrelated.<sup>45</sup> But whereas the walls of the artificial grotto of the 'Grottenhof' were covered with seashells and precious stones, those of the 'grotta' were furnished with natural rustic materials such as bark and straw. Its construction and furnishings responded to a new affective culture of religion, itself shaped by meditation practices that emphasised the imagination of spatial and material settings. Created as a hidden forest or forest garden, accessible only to a few, the 'grotta' may be considered as a heterotopic site or 'extraordinary' place related to, but distinct and also separated from, the more open spaces of Duke Wilhelm's court.<sup>46</sup> Its stage-like character was further enhanced by the presence of the two Carthusians and the fact that the duke entered it 'dressed up' as a canon.<sup>47</sup> It thus would have served the duke as a place of withdrawal from the demands of court life and as a stage to perform or practise the at the time still quite unusual role of a ruler who was forced into abdication.<sup>48</sup>

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45 Maxwell, *The Court Art of Friedrich Sustris* 158–181 (on the 'Grottenhof'); 198–200 (on the 'grotta' hermitage at the Herzog Maxburg); Maxwell S., "The Pursuit of Art and Pleasure in the Secret Grotto of Wilhelm v of Bavaria", *Renaissance Quarterly* 61, 2 (2008) 414–462.

46 I owe the phrase 'extraordinary spaces' to Rotenberg R.L., *Landscape and Power in Vienna* (Baltimore, MD – London: 1995) 16–21. Rotenberg's study is based on Foucault's notion of 'heterotopia', cited again and again in recent architectural and cultural studies. See also Rotenberg R.L., "Space, Place, Site, and Locality: The Study of Landscape in Cultural Anthropologies", in Bell S. – Sarlöv Herlin I. – Stiles R. (eds.), *Exploring the Boundaries of Landscape Architecture* (London – New York, NY: 2012) 233–258.

47 Langenkamp, *Philipp Hainhofers Münchner Reisebeschreibungen* 144 ("Relatio", fol. 120v): 'Ihre D herzog Wilhelm gehen geistlich geklaidet wie ain canonicus nur in tuch und gro-gan, ihre diener alle schwarz in wullinen röckhen mit hangenden ermeln, anstatt der kreeß klaine umbschlagkräglen'. Both the duke and his wife possessed hair shirts, some of which were preserved by their son Maximilian I. See Borkopp-Restle B., "Bussgewänder Herzog Wilhelms V. und Herzogin Renatas von Lothringen", in Baumstark, *Rom in Bayern* 353.

48 The most prominent example was of course Emperor Charles v who abdicated in 1555, an act considered extremely unusual at that time.

### The 'Productive Hands' of the Artists

The series of hermit saints engraved by the brothers Jan I (1550–1600/1601) and Raphael I Sadeler (1560/1561– after 1622 or 1628) was published several years before Hainhofer visited the 'grotta'.<sup>49</sup> The first of the series of hermits, *Solitudo, sive vitae patrum eremitarum* (*Solitude, or the Lives of the Desert Fathers*), was most probably begun in Antwerp shortly after 1585 and published in Frankfurt.<sup>50</sup> The second series, *Sylvae sacrae: Monumenta sanctioris philosophiae quam severa anachoretarum disciplina vitae et religio docuit* (*Sacred Woods: Monuments of a Holier Philosophy Taught by the Severe Discipline of Life and the Religion of the Anchorites*) was published in Munich in 1594 and dedicated to Wilhelm v. In January of that year Wilhelm v had appointed Maximilian I as his co-ruler. The year thus marked a significant moment in Bavarian state politics and a crucial turning point in Duke Wilhelm's life. Two other series of hermit saints were published after the brothers had gone to Italy: the *Trophaeum vitae solitariae* in 1598, dedicated to Cardinal Enrico Caetano, papal legate to France,<sup>51</sup> and the *Oraculum anachoreticum* in 1600, dedicated to Pope Clement VIII Aldobrandini.<sup>52</sup> In addition, a fifth series with female hermit saints, most of them engraved by Adriaen (ca. 1560–1618) and Jan II Collaert (ca. 1561–ca. 1620), was published in Antwerp and dedicated to Vaast de Grenet, abbot of the Benedictine abbey of St. Bertin at St. Omer.<sup>53</sup> Responsible for the drawings of all five series of hermit saints was Maarten de Vos (1532–1603), perhaps the most prolific and most productive Antwerp painter and draughtsman of his time.<sup>54</sup> De Vos's hermit landscapes gesture toward Pieter Bruegel's series of *Large Landscapes*, etched by the brothers Doetecum and published by

49 On the Sadeler family of print dealers and engravers: Prange P., "Sadeler", *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 22 (2005) 345–347.

50 Hoop Scheffer D. de (ed.), *Maarten de Vos*, 3 vols., compiled by C. Schuckman, Hollstein's Dutch and Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts 44–46 (Rotterdam: 1995–1996), vol. 1, 203–206, nos. 964–993. See also Vignau-Wilberg, *Citizens of Europe* 365–368, 382–384, nos. F1–F4.

51 Hoop Scheffer, *Maarten de Vos*, vol. 1, 209–212, nos. 1024–1049. See also Vignau-Wilberg, *Citizens of Europe* 370–371, 388–390, nos. F9–F12.

52 Hoop Scheffer, *Maarten de Vos*, vol. 1, 212–214, nos. 1050–1075. See also Vignau-Wilberg, *Citizens of Europe* 371–373, 391–393, nos. F13–F16.

53 Hoop Scheffer, *Maarten de Vos*, vol. 1, 197–202, nos. 921–945.

54 Only twenty-four drawings for the five series by De Vos are still extant, and twenty of these are pasted into an album now in Berlin: Reinsch A., *Die Zeichnungen des Marten de Vos: Stilistische und ikonographische Untersuchungen* (Tübingen: 1967) 126–137, no. 69.

Hieronymus Cock in Antwerp in 1555.<sup>55</sup> But while the central theme of the *Large Landscapes* is panoramic alpine landscapes, the much smaller images of the series of hermit saints primarily offer a catalogue of diverse habitats in natural environments that may be read as sites of either the experience of solitude or of alternative forms of sociability.

The titles of the first two series—*Solitudo* and *Sylvae sacrae*—draw on the evocative power and multiple meanings of these words. While the word ‘solitudo’ could refer both to the state of being alone and to an actual place (a desert, waste or uninhabited, unfrequented, and essentially ‘wild’ area),<sup>56</sup> the word ‘silva’ meant, literally, a forest, wood, or thicket, and, as a rhetorical or poetic device, the raw material of a literary work.<sup>57</sup> Like deserts and oceans—similarly vast and boundless spaces—forests were sites of the marvellous.<sup>58</sup> Their inhabitants included a wide spectrum of people including poets and hermits fleeing the hustle and bustle of cities and courts,<sup>59</sup> bandits making their living from robbery, hunters attracted by the abundance of wild animals, and a whole range of craftsmen in need of large quantities of timber and wood such as builders, carpenters, miners, glass makers, and craftsmen involved in the production of salt.<sup>60</sup>

Like the *Solitudo* series, the *Sylvae sacrae* series comprises a title page [Fig. 5.7] and twenty-nine numbered engravings depicting hermits in landscape settings.<sup>61</sup> But unlike all other series of hermits it also includes a ‘paragamma’

55 Luijten G. – Schuckman C. (eds.), *The Van Doetecum Family*, compiled by H. Nalis, 4 vols., The New Hollstein Dutch and Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts 7–10 (Rotterdam: 1998), vol. 1: *The Antwerp Years, 1554–1575* 13–21, nos. 10–21.

56 *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, ed. P.G.W. Glare (Oxford: 2003) 1783–1784. See also Šubrt J., “Sic nudus et armatus in Christo solitudinem ingressus est ... (The Motif of Desert in St. Jerome’s Legends about the Hermits)”, *Listy filologické / Folia philologica* 123, 3/4 (2000) 223–236.

57 *Oxford Latin Dictionary* 1762.

58 Le Goff, *L’Imaginaire médiéval* 59–75.

59 For the forest as locus of authorship, see the contribution by Karl A.E. Enenkel (on Petrarch) in this volume.

60 For forests as economic resources: Warde P., *Ecology, Economy and State Formation in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge: 2006) 280–346; Kendrick M., *At Work in the Early Modern English Theater: Valuing Labor* (Madison, WI: 2015); Hözl R., “Ecology, Religion, Human Retreat, and Global Imagination: Some Research Perspectives on the History of Woodlands in Early Modern Central Europe”, in Knoll M. – Reith H. (eds.), *An Environmental History of the Early Modern Period: Experiments and Perspectives* (Vienna: 2014) 280–346.

61 Hoop Scheffer, *Maarten de Vos*, vol. 1, 206–208, nos. 994–1023. See also Vignau-Wilberg, *Citizens of Europe* 369–370, 385–387, nos. F5–F8. A copy (most probably the



FIGURE 5.7 *Jan I and Raphael I Sadeler after Maarten de Vos, Title page to *Sylvae sacrae* (1594). Engraving, 16.8 × 20.3 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (inv. no. RP-P-OB-60.276).*  
IMAGE © RIJKSMUSEUM, AMSTERDAM.

a poem in eighteen distichs accompanying ‘the *Sylvae sacrae* by Jan and Raphael Sadeler’, composed almost certainly by the Munich Jesuit Matthäus Rader (1561–1634), as suggested by the initials ‘M.R.’ [Fig. 5.8]. Its decorative border is composed of branches of figs, oaks, hazels, bean plants, plums, quinces, pea plants, pear trees, blackberry bushes, and apple trees, referring to the products of the earth that served hermits for a frugal, yet healthy diet. The poem starts with the poetic “I” ‘revisit[ing] the woodland temples,/ Where once lived men beloved by heaven’; these were ‘dug’ by an ‘earlier time’, but ‘enclosed again’ by a ‘long

dedicatory copy to Wilhelm V) is mentioned in the 1598 Fickler inventory of the ducal collection: Diemer P. (ed.), *Johann Baptist Fickler: Das Inventar der Münchener herzoglichen Kunstkammer von 1598* (Munich: 2004) 44, no. 53.

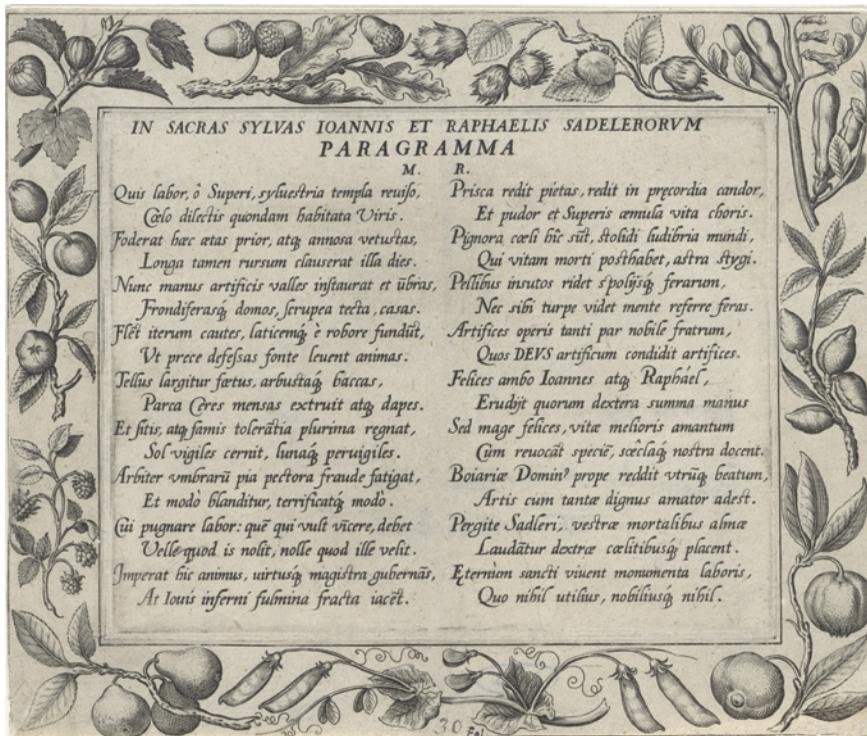


FIGURE 5.8 *Jan I and Raphael I Sadeler, "Paragramma", from *Sylvae sacrae* (1594). Engraving, 16.8 × 20 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (inv. no. RP-P-OB-60.275).*

IMAGE © RIJKSMUSEUM, AMSTERDAM.

period'.<sup>62</sup> The 'artist's hand' has now renewed 'the vales and shades,/ The leafy homes, craggy dwellings, and the huts'. To celebrate the renewal, 'the rocks weep once more, water gushing from their hard core/ To refresh, with their spring, souls wearied by prayer', while 'the earth brings forth offspring, the bushes berries'. The author then goes on to expound upon the thirst and hunger endured by the hermits, their physical deprivations, their prayer vigils day and night, and their efforts in the battle against the 'lord of the shadows', who 'assails their virtuous hearts with deceit' by using now flattery, now terror. Labour ('labor') is an important term in the poem, referring both to the work of the two engravers and to the efforts of the hermits in praying, resisting the temptations of Satan, and working their land. The final distichs of the poem praise the Sadeler brothers as

62 For the following, see Annex 2.

‘artists of such a great work [...] whose hands have been trained by God’s right hand’ and the Bavarian duke as ‘a worthy admirer of such great art’:

Artifices operis tanti par nobile fratrum,  
 Quos DEUS artificum condidit artifices.  
 Felices ambo Ioannes atque Raphael,  
 Erudiit quorum dextera summa manus,  
 Sed mage felices, vitae melioris amantum  
 Cum revocant speciem, saeclaque nostra docent.  
 Boiariae Dominus prope reddit utrumque beatum,  
 Artis cum tantae dignus amator adest.  
 Pergite Sadleri, vestrae mortalibus almae  
 Laudantur dexterae coelitusque placent.  
 Eternum sancti vivent monumenta laboris,  
 Quo nihil utilius nobiliusque nihil.

The artists of such a great work are a noble pair of brothers,  
 Whom God created as the greatest of all artists.  
 Jan and Raphael are both fortunate men,  
 Whose hands have been trained by God’s right hand,  
 But even more fortunate because they bring to our minds images  
 Of those who love the better life, and teach our age.  
 The Lord of the Bavarians renders both almost blessed  
 Because he stands by them as a worthy admirer of such great art.  
 Proceed, Sadelers! Your productive hands are praised  
 By mortals and are pleasing to the gods.  
 May the monuments of your holy work live forever,  
 More useful and more noble than all else.

Indeed, while Duke Wilhelm’s hermitages in the city residence and the country retreat are no longer extant, the reproducible paper ‘monuments’ by the Sadelers still survive today. Whereas the ‘grotta’ of the Veste and the wooden chapels with their hermitages at Schleissheim served as stage-like sites of retreat and leisure for an abdicated ruler, his family, and his friends, the *Sylvae sacrae* series would have offered the tools to engage the imagination in the process of constructing such places of solitude in forests and wastelands in the mind. In the title page, the ‘sacred woods’ are identified with the ‘desert’ (*desertum*) into which ‘Jesus was led by the Spirit [...] in order to be tempted by the devil’ (*Matthew 4:1–11*; cf. *Mark 1:12–13*, *Luke 4:1–13*) [Fig. 5.7]. Represented are the first and the third temptations: In the forest clearing to the left the devil



FIGURE 5.9 *Jan I and Raphael I Sadeler after Maarten de Vos, Plate 1, "Chariton", from *Sylvae sacrae* (1594). Engraving, 16.6 × 20 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (inv. no. RP-P-OB-60.277).*

IMAGE © RIJKSMUSEUM, AMSTERDAM.

tempts Jesus to change stones into bread. On the mountain top to the right the devil promises Jesus 'all the kingdoms of the world' if he will 'fall down and adore' him. The winged figures kneeling to each side of the large cross at the exact centre of the composition personify prayer ('precatio') and penitence or self-restraint ('abstinentia'). The plate in the centre of the cross bears the inscription 'Monuments of a holier philosophy taught by the severe discipline of life and the religion of the anchorites', referring to the long tradition of understanding ascetic practice as 'spiritual exercise', as also promoted by Ignatius of Loyola.<sup>63</sup>

In the *Sylvae sacrae* and the other series of hermits, Maarten de Vos and the Sadeler brothers put considerable effort into exploring the variety of simple dwellings appropriate for hermits and adapted to their natural environments.

63 Hadot P., *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, trans. M. Chase (Oxford: 1995) 126–144.



FIGURE 5.10 *Jan I and Raphael I Sadeler after Maarten de Vos, Plate 9, "Cyriac", from Sylvae sacrae (1594). Engraving, 16.6 × 19.8 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (inv. no. RP-P-OB-60.285).*

IMAGE © RIJKSMUSEUM, AMSTERDAM.

Several of the engravings of the *Sylvae sacrae* feature caves, groves, and other natural dwellings, sparsely furnished to accommodate the hermits' needs for prayer, sacred reading, and simple handicrafts: Chariton, for example, is depicted contemplating a crucifix in his famous 'hanging' cave high in the mountains of the Judean wilderness or desert [Fig. 5.9]. The inscription states that Chariton, having been miraculously 'freed from chains and gaol/ Hastens to shut himself up in the prison of the forests (*nemorum carceribus*)'.<sup>64</sup> The secluded dwelling of Chariton's pupil Cyriac in the innermost desert of Sousakim (el-Quseir) is imagined as a cave hidden under the roots of a tree, situated on the bank of a tree-lined river. The root vegetables laid out in the cave may allude to the garden Cyriac is said to have cultivated next to his cell [Fig. 5.10].

64 'Iconius CHARITON vinclis et carcere missus/ Se nemorum properat claudere carceribus'.



FIGURE 5.11 *Jan I and Raphael I Sadeler after Maarten de Vos, Plate 8, "Blasius", from Sylvae sacrae (1594). Engraving, 16.3 × 19.8 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (inv. no. RP-P-OB-60.284).*

IMAGE © RIJKSMUSEUM, AMSTERDAM.

Similarly, the cave where Blasius hid himself from human beings but not wild beasts is formed by rocks and trees [Fig. 5.11]. The cave dwelling of Fulgentius who, in order to avoid being elected a bishop, 'fled out of sight to the rocks that cannot see' has been converted into a secret chapel [Fig. 5.12].<sup>65</sup> Hermit saints believed to have dwelled in 'leafy homes' are represented, too: Bavo, who 'fled from a gilded chamber to a leafy hut' is shown praying in an almost paradiacal lush valley, watered by a river [Fig. 5.13].<sup>66</sup> Friardus, who took refuge in the 'inhospitable forests' ('inhospita sylva') on an island near Nantes, is shown prostrating himself in the midst of a wood as he performs the miracle of causing a dead fallen tree to come back to life again [Fig. 5.14].

65 'Ex oculis caecos effugit in scopulos'.

66 'Aurato ex thalamo in frondea tecta fugit'.



FIGURE 5.12 Jan I and Raphael I Sadeler after Maarten de Vos, Plate 5, "Fulgentius", from *Sylvae sacrae* (1594). Engraving, 16.4 × 20 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (inv. no. RP-P-OB-60.281).  
IMAGE © RIJKSMUSEUM, AMSTERDAM.

The emotional involvement of the viewers is achieved through the variety of the settings depicted: the natural environments (alternating between forests, groves, gardens, seas, river valleys, hilly and mountainous areas, lush and barren landscapes), the seasons and the times of the day, and the wild animals sharing the company of their solitary friends. The solitude of the individual hermit or hermit communities is contrasted with views of ordinary life, represented by cities and villages. The *Sylvae sacrae* illustrate the process of constructing in the mind such sites of solitude for the practice of prayer and meditation. The space of prayer and sacred study<sup>67</sup> is identified with the habitat of the hermit that plays on the myth of the "natural" origins of architecture: 'the leafy homes,

67 I am using here space in the sense of Michel de Certeau as 'practised place'. See Certeau M. de., *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. S. Rendall (Berkeley, CA: 1984) 91–130. See also Burger G., "In the Merchant's Bedchamber", in Gertsman E. – Stevenson J. (eds.), *Thresholds of Medieval Visual Culture: Liminal Spaces* (Woodbridge: 2012) 260–280.



FIGURE 5.13 *Jan I and Raphael I Sadeler after Maarten de Vos, Plate 13, "Bavo", from *Sylvae sacrae* (1594). Engraving, 16.8 × 19.8 × cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (inv. no. RP-P-OB-60.289).*  
IMAGE © RIJKSMUSEUM, AMSTERDAM.

craggy dwellings, and the huts' mentioned in the 'paragamma'. Interestingly, the *Sylvae sacrae* also include the duke's patron saint, St. William of Malavalle. In the engraving, he is shown doing penance in front of a cave. The inscription alludes to his transformation from a 'voracious, fierce soldier', a 'wicked enemy of the cross' to a hermit saint 'gentler than a lamb' [Fig. 5.15].<sup>68</sup>

As Hainhofer observed, the Sadeler's pictures of hermits' dwellings found their counterparts in the 'grotta' of the Munich residence and the nine chapels with hermitages at Schleissheim. United by the themes of 'metamorphosis', conversion, and change the "real" and "represented" spaces could be described as heterotopias of wilderness, spaces in the realisation of which the imagination of the biblical wilderness and the local woodlands and wasteland played a crucial role.<sup>69</sup>

68 'Ante vorax, milesque ferox, nunc mitior agno'.

69 For Michel Foucault's notion of 'heterotopia' see footnote 8, above.



FIGURE 5.14 *Jan I and Raphael I Sadeler after Maarten de Vos, Plate 17, "Friardus"*, from *Sylvae sacrae* (1594). Engraving, 16.5 × 19.8 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (inv. no. RP-P-OB-60.293).

IMAGE © RIJKSMUSEUM, AMSTERDAM.

### Conclusions: Constructing the Persona of the Hermit

Addressed to some of the leading representatives of the Catholic Reform, these series of hermits enjoyed unprecedented success among reform-minded collectors and lovers of art in Europe and beyond. This points to a growing interest in what might be called practices of self-cultivation or care for the religious self.<sup>70</sup> Federico Borromeo (1564–1631), archbishop of Milan and an eminent art collector, possessed several paintings of early Christian hermits in desert landscapes, some of them executed by Paul Bril after the Sadeler

<sup>70</sup> Macho T., "Mit sich allein: Einsamkeit als Kulturtechnik", in Assmann A. – Assmann J. (eds.), *Einsamkeit. Archäologie der literarischen Kommunikation* 6 (Munich: 2000) 27–44 (with reference to Michel Foucault).



FIGURE 5.15 *Jan I and Raphael I Sadeler after Maarten de Vos, Plate 27, "William of Malavalle", from *Sylvae sacrae* (1594). Engraving, 16.5 × 20 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (inv. no. RP-P-OB-60.303).*  
 IMAGE © RIJKSMUSEUM, AMSTERDAM.

engravings.<sup>71</sup> Similarly, Giacomo Boncompagni (1548–1612), the son of Pope Gregory XIII Boncompagni, took the Sadeler series of hermits as the basis for the wall decorations of the so-called *Stanza della penitenza* in his palace at Sora.<sup>72</sup> An investigation into the archival inventories of the Getty Provenance Index Databases has yielded, for the seventeenth century, over three hundred records of paintings of hermits documented for collections in Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, and France. The titles of these works ('Solitude', 'Hermit in a Landscape', 'Temptation of a Hermit', 'Reading Hermit', 'Writing Hermit') indi-

<sup>71</sup> Jones P., *Federico Borromeo and the Ambrosiana: Art Patronage and Reform in Seventeenth-century Milan* (Cambridge: 1993) 120–135.

<sup>72</sup> Viscogliosi A., "Giacomo I Boncompagni e la Stanza della penitenza del palazzo dell'isola: Un ciclo di affreschi nel Sorano all'epoca del Baronio", in De Maio R. (ed.), *Baronio e l'arte* (Sora: 1985) 553–556.

cate the range of roles and identities that made up the persona of the hermit in that time period.<sup>73</sup>

Christopher S. Wood has suggested that for Albrecht Dürer and other artists who, around 1500, began to explore landscapes and nature, the wilderness retreat of the hermit—as a place of trial and divine revelation—could have provided a model for situating the location of their creative work.<sup>74</sup> The Sadeler brothers, who were trained in the same northern landscape tradition, fashioned themselves and were fashioned by their Jesuit commentator as ‘supreme artists’ who gave new life to the long-buried deserts and wildernesses of Christian antiquity. The deliberate archaic quality of the hermit landscapes with their rustic abodes and ascetic inhabitants must have appealed to a broad range of lovers of art across the confessional divide. By the 1600s, as the consequence of social, religious, and institutional change, solitude or, rather, temporary solitude or ‘disengagement’ from daily activities, had become a sought-after good for a wide range of individuals living in cities or at courts. Philosophers, scholars, poets, artists, alchemists, and other learned men made use of the persona of the hermit to articulate their own needs for a space or time of solitude and freedom to devote themselves to their writing, art making, and laboratory research.<sup>75</sup>

As for artists’ inclination to solitude, Giorgio Vasari generally sees solitude as a necessary condition for creative work. In his own life, he writes about the ‘supreme pleasure’ he experienced when working ‘in the Alpine and eternal solitude and quietness’ of the Camaldoli hermitage and monastery: ‘And in that period of two months I proved how much more one is assisted in studies by sweet tranquility and honest solitude than by the noises of public squares and courts’.<sup>76</sup>

73 The artists mentioned include: Abraham Bloemaert, Paul Bril, Jan Brueghel the Elder, Ludovico Carracci, Cerano, Domenichino, Dossو Dossi, Gerard Dou, Albrecht Dürer, Luca Giordano, Guercino, Jan Lievens, Pier Francesco Mola, Girolamo Muziano, Giovanni Lanfranco, Nicolas Poussin, Mattia Preti, Guido Reni, Jusepe de Ribera, Salvator Rosa, David Teniers the Younger, Titian, and Maarten de Vos as well as many anonymous artists: <http://piprod.getty.edu/starweb/pi/servlet.starweb> (accessed: 22.09.2017).

74 Wood C.S., “Indoor-Outdoor: The Studio around 1500”, in Cole M. – Pardo M. (eds.), *Inventions of the Studio, Renaissance to Romanticism* (Chapel Hill, NC – London: 2005) 36–72, esp. 59–64.

75 Shapin S., *Never Pure: Historical Studies of Science as if It Was Produced by People with Bodies, Situated in Time, Space, Culture, and Society, and Struggling for Credibility and Authority* (Baltimore MD: 2010) 119–141 (“The Mind Is Its Own Place”: Science and Solitude in Seventeenth-century England).

76 I cite from Vasari G., *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, trans. C. de Vere, 2 vols. (New York, NY: 1996), vol. 2, 1027. Vasari G., *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori e*

His comments on Jacopo da Pontormo (1494–1557), whose home and studio was only accessible by a ladder that he would draw up after having entered it, are more ambiguous. While he does not recommend Pontormo's life style, he nonetheless confirms that 'solitude [...] is the greatest friend of study'.<sup>77</sup> In the realm of religion, the influential meditation treatise by Francis de Sales (1567–1622), *Philothea: Or an Introduction to the Devout Life*, provided instruction for courtiers and city dwellers on how to construct such internal retreats. De Sales advises his female addressee Philothea 'to retire at various times into the solitude of your own heart even while outwardly engaged in discussions or transactions with others'.<sup>78</sup> The series of hermit landscapes certainly aided the imagination in visualising these places in the mind.

As already mentioned, the *Sylvae sacrae* series by the Sadeler brothers coincided with the beginning of Duke Wilhelm's gradual withdrawal from political life and may indeed have inspired the 'wilderness' of the Veste described by Hainhofer. The fact that the 'grotta' was hidden and locked, but nonetheless opened for special guests and on special occasions, only enhanced its atmosphere of allure. The cutting, transporting, and replanting of fir trees must have cost a fortune. The automata at Schleissheim undoubtedly also absorbed considerable costs. With the 'grotta', Duke Wilhelm aestheticised and staged the spectacle of his early and, in fact, forced abdication. The chapels and hermitages at Schleissheim marked a project much larger in scope aimed at the reform of both the religious and economic landscape under the leadership of the Wittelsbach dukes. Duke Wilhelm took on the role of St. William of Malavalle, presenting himself as the creator and central actor of a campaign that would turn Schleissheim into an almost utopian pious and productive landscape. In this essay, the hermitages at the Munich and Schleissheim residences of Wilhelm v have been presented through the eye of a discerning Lutheran art agent and connoisseur. Without Hainhofer's account the project would have most probably fallen into oblivion.

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architettori nelle redazioni del 1550 e 1568, ed. R. Bettarini and P. Barocchi, 8 vols. (Florence: 1966–1997), vol. 6, 375–376 (Giuntina): 'Dove giunto, mi piacque sommamente l'alpestre et eterna solitudine e quiete di quel luogo santo [...] il quale in detto spazio di due mesi provai quanto molto più giovi agli studii una dolce quiete et onesta solitudine che i rumori delle piazze e delle corti, conobbi [...].'

<sup>77</sup> Vasari, *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, vol. 2, 365; Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori*, vol. 5, 328: 'Quanto alla solitudine, io ho sempre udito dire ch'ell'è amicissima degli studii'.

<sup>78</sup> Sales F. de., *Introduction to the Devout Life*, trans. J.K. Ryan (New York, NY: 2003) 86 (11/12).

It is, I think, noteworthy that Duke Wilhelm was eager to show Hainhofer the 'grotta' and also took great pains to prepare him for the visit of Schleissheim, perhaps by explaining to him the workings and meanings of the automata, devices he had favoured from a young age. Although Duke Wilhelm's turn to religion is undisputed, his abdication also allowed him to pursue other interests. Forced by the Bavarian estates to commit himself not to make any further purchases, Duke Wilhelm, with the help of his agent, nonetheless went on acquiring Asian luxury goods such as lacquerware, silks, and porcelain.<sup>79</sup> He also continued to accumulate relics, extending his search to the Protestant parts of Europe and the mission areas overseas. His withdrawal and retreat from rulership was complemented by a desire in foreign novelties—both worldly and religious—and collecting endeavours that reached out across the world.

#### Annex 1: Hainhofer's Description of the 'grotta' (1611)<sup>80</sup>

[fol. 120v] Ihre D herzog Wilhelm gehen geistlich geklaidet wie ain canonicus nur in tuch und grogan, ihre diener alle schwarz in wullinen röckhen mit hangenden ermeln, anstatt der kreeß klaine umbschlagkräglen. Die grotta, so in diesem newen baw, ist von rechten felsen zusammen gemacht, mit eingehauenen zellen, mit dannen und wilden bäumen besetzt, quilt ain wässerlin auß dem felsen herauß, das macht ain bächlin und weierlin, darinnen schöne [fol. 121r] forhenen schwimmen; denen gibt man speißfisch. Wann man ihnen ainen speißfisch in das waßer hebt mit der handt, so kommen sie und hollens, und hat man dem grafen von Zollern, alß er unlengsten auch ainen hat wollen hineinheben, aine grosse forhennen die finger zerklempt, das ihme das blutt zu den näglen außgeloffen; darauf er gesagt, nun sehe er, das die fisch auch zähn haben. Im bächlein, wie das wasser heraußquillet, ligen in blei gegoßne schlangen, edexen, krotten, krebs et cetera. Der supellex in dieser grotta ist alles nur von baast, stroo, reiß und stecken zusamengeflochten; der altar von felsen. Im stüblin auf den winter gar ain schlecht öfelin, und sicht aller gar finster, melancholisch, andächtig, ja forchtsam auß. Auf der maur ist St Franciscus in der wildnuß gemahlet, die deckhin nur von reiß und gestreiß zusamengeflochten wie hütteten. An der maur hats ainen baum, darin steckt ain zapfen; wan man ihn heraußzücht, so sihet man durch den baum hinauß an statthurn und an die uhr, wie vil es geschlagen, und ist dises daz merckzaichen diser grotten. Es hat [fol. 121v] auch aine klaine loggia über das wässerlin; darin ligt ain lang brett auf stozten, und sein ain zwelf nidere stülen mit stroo und reiß zusamengeflochten, welche man für die fürstliche personen hineingethan, alß sie mit ihrem

79 Seelig L., "Die Münchner Kunstkammer", in Sauerländer W. (ed.), *Die Münchner Kunstkammer*, vol. 3: *Aufsätze und Anhänge* (Munich: 2008) 1–114, at 48.

80 Langenkamp, *Philipp Hainhofer's Münchner Reisebeschreibungen* 145 ("Relatio", fol. 121v).

herrn dochtermann, dem erzherzogen Ferdinando von Grätz, und desselben jungen herrschaft und mit ihren kindern zu München in diser grotten bei den cartheüsern tafel gehalten haben. Es hat 2 cartheüser in diser grotta, alß einen priester und ainen bruder, welcher ain lai, und ist alle dise grotta zusamen gemacht, alß wie man in den gemählen und kupferstucken die patres und eremitas abconterfeet sihet. Den priester fragte ich, ob ihm die weil nie lang seie, sagte er, nein, er meditiere immer, quid Deus fecerit pro se, quid Deus faciat in se, quid Deus facturus sit de se. Dise grotta ist verschlossen, und lasset man ohne ihrer D vorwissen und bevelch niemand fremden hinein. Sie haben aber dem herrn Schönen von selbsten gnedigst bevohlen, das er mich soll hinein führen und mir alles zeigen, und ist sie wegen der wildachtigen construction sehr wol zu sehen. Die ganze dannenbäum hat man auf den [fol. 122r] schiffen hin bracht und also ganz widerumb in die erde gesezt.

**Annex 2: In sacras sylvas Ioannis et Raphaelis Sadelerorum  
paragamma**

Quis labor, o Superi! Sylvestria templa reviso,  
Coelo dilectis quondam habitata viris.  
Foderat haec aetas prior atque annosa vetustas,  
Longa tamen rursum cluserat illa dies.  
Nunc manus artificis valles instaurat et umbras,  
Frondiferasque domos, scruea tecta, casas.  
Flent iterum cautes laticemque e robore fundunt,  
Ut prece defessas fonte levent animas.  
Tellus largitur foetus arbustaque baccas,  
Parca Ceres mensas extruit atque dapes.  
Et sitis atque famis tolerantia plurima regnat,  
Sol vigiles cernit, lunaque pervigiles.  
Arbiter umbrarum pia pectora fraude fatigat,  
Et modo blanditur, terrificatque modo.  
Cui pugnare labor: quem qui vult vincere, debet  
Velle quod is nolit, nolle quod ille velit.  
Imperat hic animus virtusque magistra gubernans,  
At Iovis inferni fulmina fracta iacet.  
  
Prisca reddit pietas, reddit in praecordia candor,  
Et pudor et Superis aemula vita choris.  
Pignora coeli hic sunt, stolidi ludibria mundi,  
Qui vitam morti posthabet, astra Stygi.  
Pellibus insutos ridet spoliisque ferarum,

Nec sibi turpe videt mente referre feras.  
 Artifices operis tanti par nobile fratrum,  
 Quos **DEUS** artificum condidit artifices.  
 Felices ambo Ioannes atque Raphael,  
 Erudiit quorum dextera summa manus,  
 Sed mage felices, vitae melioris amantum  
 Cum revocant speciem, saeclaque nostra docent.  
 Boiariae Dominus prope reddit utrumque beatum,  
 Artis cum tantae dignus amator adest.  
 Pergite Sadleri, vestrae mortalibus almae  
 Laudantur dexterae coelitibusque placent.  
 Eternum sancti vivent monumenta laboris,  
 Quo nihil utilius nobilusque nihil.

**Paragramma: Verses Accompanying Jan and Raphael Sadeler's  
*Sylvae sacrae***

What work, O gods! I revisit the woodland temples,  
 Where once lived men beloved by heaven.  
 An earlier time and a lengthy age had dug these things  
 But a long period had enclosed them again.  
 Now the artist's hand renews the vales and shades,  
 The leafy homes, craggy dwellings, and the huts.  
 The rocks weep once more, water gushing from their hard core  
 To refresh, with their spring, souls wearied by prayer.  
 The earth brings forth offspring, the bushes berries,  
 Sparing Ceres sets up tables and banquets  
 And great endurance of thirst and hunger holds sway.  
 The sun watches them awake, and the moon watches them even more awake.  
 The lord of the shadows assails their virtuous hearts with deceit:  
 One moment he flatters, the next he terrifies them.  
 It is hard work to fight against him; he who wishes to overcome him  
 Must want what he does not, and refuse what he wants.  
 Here the mind rules and mistress virtue governs,  
 And lightning bolts of Jupiter of the Hell lie smashed.  
 The former virtue returns, bright purity returns to their hearts,  
 And modesty and a life that emulates the heavenly choirs.

Here are the pledges of heaven, the laughing stock of the stupid world  
 Which values death more than life, hell more than heaven.  
 It laughs at those dressed in skins and the spoils of wild beasts  
 And does not see that it is shameful to behave like wild beasts.  
 The artists of such a great work are a noble pair of brothers,  
 Whom God created as the greatest of all artists.  
 Jan and Raphael are both fortunate men,  
 Whose hands have been trained by God's right hand.  
 But even more fortunate because they bring to our minds images  
 Of those who love the better life, and teach our age.  
 The Lord of the Bavarians renders both almost blessed  
 Because he stands by them as a worthy admirer of such great art.  
 Proceed, Sadelers! Your productive hands are praised  
 By mortals and are pleasing to the gods.  
 May the monuments of your holy work live forever,  
 More useful and more noble than all else.

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## **PART 2**

### *Solitude in the Pictorial and Emblematic Imagination*

• •



# Anachoretic Ideals in Urban Settings: Meditational Practices and Mural Painting in Trecento Italy

*Raphaële Preisinger*

Starting in the second half of the thirteenth century, the mystical component of the anachoretic ideal typified by the lives of the desert fathers gained increasing significance in urban centres throughout Italy. Important societal changes led to a rise in popularity of a spiritual model based on Cistercian religiosity, conferring private devotion a surrogate function for an actual life *in eremo*. The mendicant orders played a prominent role in promoting this revival of the eremitic and contemplative ideals of early monasticism. In this essay, I would like to demonstrate how the growing importance of meditational practices that accompanied this shift impacted the mural decoration of Italian convents and churches in urban space.<sup>1</sup> A specific iconography that was developed as an aid to meditation in a devotional manual of the thirteenth century, the *Lignum vitae* by the Franciscan St. Bonaventure (1217–1274), was adapted to monumental structures in order to promote devotion to the humanity of Christ among a wide audience comprising lay and ecclesiastical circles of late medieval society alike.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For an earlier attempt at associating the shift in Christian spirituality with works of art cf. Krüger K., "Bildandacht und Bergeinsamkeit: Der Eremit als Rollenspiel in der städtischen Gesellschaft", in Belting H. – Blume D. (eds.), *Malerei und Stadtkultur in der Dantazeit: Die Argumentation der Bilder* (Munich: 1989) 187–200.

<sup>2</sup> For a thorough analysis of the iconography of St. Bonaventure's *Lignum vitae*, cf. Preisinger R., *"Lignum vitae": Zum Verhältnis materieller Bilder und mentaler Bildpraxis im Mittelalter* (Paderborn: 2014). In the present essay, I discuss a number of these works in the context of the revival of anachoretic ideals described above and consider them in conjunction with a Dominican iconography that has hitherto been left almost unstudied.

## Mendicant Promotion of Bernardine Ideals: Urban Identity in Conflict

As is well known, the settlement of the mendicant orders in Italian city centres in the second quarter of the thirteenth century initiated a transfer of monastic forms of life and piety into urban environments.<sup>3</sup> This process, however, didn't occur without friction: Through their writings, mendicant authors tried to resolve the conflict they felt arose from being urbanised and clericalised.<sup>4</sup> The archbishop of Pisa, Federigo Visconti († 1277), who never joined the mendicant orders but maintained a close relationship with them throughout his life, praised the Franciscans' ability to combine *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*, to balance a life of prayer and one of preaching to the laity. However, referring to the life of a mendicant prelate who 'was obliged to descend from the mountain of contemplation to the city of action', he clearly outlined the stark contrast between the mendicants' way of life and the ideal of *contemptus mundi* of early monasticism and pointed out the worldly tarnish that one might contract from the former condition.<sup>5</sup>

During the decades following the mendicants' settlement in the cities, a paradigm shift occurred with respect to hagiographical models. The approaches to sanctity that now gained in significance corresponded with a tendency already traceable in Cistercian hagiographical writings and favoured an orientation toward mysticism and an eremitical way of life.<sup>6</sup> The *vita* of St. Francis (1181–1226), whose imitation of Christ had been described as apostle-like and charitable until the mid-thirteenth century, was now cast in the light of a process of inner self-perfecting. In the *Legenda maior*, St. Francis's official biography, St. Bonaventure developed this new perception of St. Francis into a

3 For a wider discussion of the problem cf. Elm K. (ed.), *Stellung und Wirksamkeit der Bettelorden in der städtischen Gesellschaft* (Berlin: 1981).

4 Cf. the fundamental study of Le Goff J., "Ordres mendiants et urbanisation dans la France médiévale", *Annales* 25, 4 (1970) 924–946.

5 Cf. Murray A., "Archbishop and Mendicants in Thirteenth-Century Pisa", in Kaspar Elm (ed.), *Stellung und Wirksamkeit der Bettelorden in der städtischen Gesellschaft* (Berlin: 1981) 19–75, esp. 63; Davis Adam J., *The Holy Bureaucrat: Eudes Rigaud and Religious Reform in Thirteenth-Century Normandy* (Ithaca, NY – London: 2006) 121. The English translation of the phrase 'opportebat eum descendere de monte contemplationis in Civitate actionis' is taken from Murray's essay, p. 63.

6 Cf. Goodich M., *Vita Perfecta: The Ideal of Sainthood in the Thirteenth Century*, Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 25 (Stuttgart: 1982) 127.

hagiographical concept on the basis of Augustinian-Cistercian mysticism.<sup>7</sup> During the fourteenth century, ideals originally formulated by Cistercian religiosity continued to gain growing importance, the *via unitiva* thus coming to replace the merits of the works of mercy and of apostolic conversion in religious life.<sup>8</sup>

These changes were not confined to the walls of convents: due to the mendicants' activities at the very heart of urban societies, a 'monasticisation of the laity' took place, which reached its point of culmination in the mystical movement.<sup>9</sup> The foundation of penitential confraternities and of associations of tertiaries is but one instance documenting this process. Religious models whose sanctity was cast in the light of contemplative and mystical practices gained paradigmatic significance for urban piety and writings developed in the Bernardine era for life in clostral seclusion, which bear titles such as *De contemptu mundi* or *Epistola ad fratres de Monte Dei*, spread widely throughout urban societies.<sup>10</sup> The early example of Umiliana de' Cerchi in Florence, who chose to dwell in her family's tower in the centre of the city as an anchoress in order to conform to the ideal of living a harsh life in solitude, demonstrates the attraction of this model of life for lay people.<sup>11</sup>

The increased significance of retrospective ideals geared towards the mystical ascent to God led to a rise in importance of scripturally based meditational practices promoting compassion with Christ. The Franciscans were leading in fostering spiritual exercises aimed at participation in the events of Christ's life and death through meditation. Works such as the *Lignum vitae*, written in Latin presumably between 1260 and 1263 by St. Bonaventure and described by Denise Despres as 'the earliest and most influential source of Franciscan

7 Bonaventura, *Legenda maior sancti Francisci*, in Menestò E. – Brufani S. (eds.), *Fontes franciscani* (Assisi: 1995) 775–961.

8 Vauchez A., *La sainteté en occident aux derniers siècles du moyen age d'après les procès de canonisation et les documents hagiographiques*, Bibliothèque des Écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome 241 (Rome: 1981) 472–478.

9 Ibidem 447. The expression 'Monachisierung der Laien' originates from Harnack A., *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, 3 vols. (Tübingen: 1910), vol. 3, *Die Entwicklung des kirchlichen Dogmas II III* 446.

10 Cf. Constable G., "The Popularity of Twelfth-Century Spiritual Writers in the Late Middle Ages", in Molho A. – Tedeschi J. (eds.), *Renaissance: Studies in Honor of Hans Baron* (Dekalb, IL: 1971) 3–28.

11 Cf. Benvenuti Papi A., "Umiliana dei Cerchi: Nascita di un culto nella Firenze del Duecento", *Studi francescani* 77 (1980) 87–117.

devotions based on Christ's life', graphically recount the events of Christ's earthly sojourn and invite the reader to identify with him.<sup>12</sup>

The *Meditaciones vite Christi*, a devotional manual likely written by John of Caulibus for a Poor Clare in the mid-fourteenth century<sup>13</sup> that was to reach enormous popularity, describes the effects of this type of exercise: The reader is to imaginatively see the recounted events and to hear them as if present to them.<sup>14</sup> Imagination of these events is, however, only effective, if those things seen and heard are approached with compassion: indeed, as a citation from St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians (*Galatians 2:19*) reminds the reader of the *Lignum vitae* at the beginning of the treatise, the objective is to die with Christ on the cross.<sup>15</sup> Early translation of works such as the *Meditaciones vite Christi* into different vernacular languages was instrumental in spreading this type of devotional practice originally developed for a monastic environment widely among the different strata of late medieval society. Some versions of the *Meditaciones* were meant to be read out aloud and might even have appealed particularly to the laity who was prohibited direct access to the Bible by a synod held at Toulouse in 1229.<sup>16</sup>

Through imitation of Christ, this type of meditational practice invites the faithful to progressively reach uniformity with Christ. The process of gradual assimilation requires perpetual recollection of Christ's words and deeds, which is the reason why Bonaventure employed a method derived from the *ars memoriae* in composing the *Lignum vitae*.<sup>17</sup> In the prologue, St. Bonaventure

<sup>12</sup> Despres D., *Ghostly Sights: Visual Meditation in Late Medieval Literature* (Norman, OK: 1989) 20. For the *Lignum vitae* in the context of meditation on the life of Christ cf. O'Connell P.F., *The Lignum Vitae of Saint Bonaventure and the Medieval Devotional Tradition*, Ph.D. dissertation (Fordham University: 1985).

<sup>13</sup> Stallings-Taney M., "Introduction", in Iohannes de Caulibus, *Meditaciones vite Christi, olim S. Bonaventuro attributae*, ed. M. Stallings-Taney (Turnhout: 1997) ix–xviii, esp. ix–xi.

<sup>14</sup> Over 200 manuscripts of the original Latin work are still extant. Cf. *Meditations on the Life of Christ: An Illustrated Manuscript of the Fourteenth Century*, ed. and trans I. Ragusa – R.B. Green (Princeton, NJ: 1961) xxiii.

<sup>15</sup> Bonaventura, *Lignum vitae*, ed. Collegium S. Bonaventurae, S. Bonaventurae Opera Omnia 8 (Quaracchi: 1898) 68–87, 68: 'Christo confixus sum cruci'—'I've been crucified with Christ'.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Deanesly M., *The Lollard Bible and Other Medieval Biblical Versions* (London: 1920) 36–37. Lollard notes that 'the synod was of far wider than provincial authority' (36).

<sup>17</sup> The scheme he develops in the *Lignum vitae*, however, also serves other purposes, cf. Preisinger, "Lignum vitae". For a detailed analysis of the characteristic features of medieval memory training and of a specifically medieval *ars memoriae* as compared to that developed during antiquity cf. Carruthers Mary J., *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: 1990), esp. 80–155; for a broader discussion of schemes in

summons his reader to imagine the paradisiacal tree of life with twelve branches and twelve fruits, six of which are to be placed on either side of a central trunk. While the fruits correspond to the chapter headings of the *Lignum vitae*, the branches refer to the forty-eight verses that serve as captions to the individual meditations of his work. With this scheme in mind, which represents the content of the entire manual, the reader is enabled to remember and to meditate on Christ's words and deeds anywhere and anytime and is thus aided in his efforts to emulate him.

Certainly, the faraway goal of mystical union with God may be considered the backdrop of contemplative practice in general. Indeed, due to the endowment of St. Francis with the marks of Christ's wounds on the secluded ground of mount Alverna, the Franciscan order's founder acquired paradigmatic significance for this kind of meditational exercise. The *Meditaciones vite Christi* describe this event as a consequence of St. Francis's intensive contemplation of Christ's life and death and of his gradual assimilation with Christ.<sup>18</sup> According to St. Bonaventure, the wings of the seraph that appeared to St. Francis prior to his reception of the *stigmata* symbolise the different degrees of the mystical ascent to God, while the *stigmata* themselves reveal St. Francis's eschatological role as the angel of the sixth seal described in St. John's *Apocalypse*.<sup>19</sup>

### Mural Paintings in Urban Contexts as an Aid to Meditation

To this day, several mural paintings throughout Italy dating back to the fourteenth century show the mnemotechnical scheme developed in St. Bonaventure's *Lignum vitae*. Murals that are still extant and evidence of lost ones testify to the wide dissemination of this iconography.<sup>20</sup> While the paintings addressed primarily to a Franciscan audience may easily be accounted for given the Franciscan authorship of the *Lignum vitae* and the particular promotion of this kind of meditative practice by the Franciscans, those directed

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medieval culture cf. Bolzoni L., *The Web of Images: Vernacular Preaching from Its Origins to St Bernardino da Siena* (Aldershot – Burlington, VT: 2004).

18 Iohannes de Caulibus, *Meditaciones vite Christi* (ed. Stallings-Taney) Prologus.

19 Bonaventura, *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, ed. and trans J. Kaup, *Itinerarium mentis in Deum, De reductione artium ad theologiam / Pilgerbuch der Seele zu Gott, Die Zurückführung der Künste auf die Theologie* (Munich: 1961) Prologus; Bonaventura, *Legenda maior sancti Francisci*, chapter XIII.

20 For an overview of extant and lost murals displaying the iconography of the *Lignum vitae* in Italy cf. Preisinger, "Lignum vitae" 244–253.

mainly towards the laity are more difficult to explain. For what reason was a pictorial scheme summarising the contents of a meditative manual written in Latin for an erudite readership often depicted on the walls of churches frequented predominantly by a lay audience?

In search for an answer, let us consider the huge mural painted in 1342 or 1347 by an anonymous artist in the basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore in Bergamo.<sup>21</sup> This church began to be built in 1137 and initially served as a cathedral in wintertime. It is located on the south wall of the southern transept of the church. Since 1661, Pietro Liberi's *Diluvio Universale* and the accompanying frame cover up about two thirds of this painting, resulting in the visibility of its lower part only. Luckily, Liberi's work has recently been removed for restoration, thus temporarily making it possible to examine the parts of the fresco usually hidden beneath it at close range [Fig. 6.1].

Following the instructions given in the *Lignum vitae*, the chapter headings and the verses of Bonaventure's work are inscribed on the fruits and branches of a monumental tree. The text, which runs from the bottom left to the top right side, is written in giant letters and was clearly meant to be read from a distance. In addition to those elements allotted for by Bonaventure, large roundels containing scenes referring to the *Lignum vitae* adorn the tree of life in Bergamo.<sup>22</sup> The Old Testament figures that surround the scheme laterally, predicting the events of the New Testament summarised in the *Lignum vitae*, became an integral part of this iconography early on. Another element that reoccurs often in representations of the *Lignum vitae* is the depiction of Christ on the cross, which alludes to St. Bonaventure's explanation that the life-giving tree he describes in his work is, in fact, Christ himself. In Bergamo, Christ is shown nailed to the branches of the *Lignum vitae*. Clearly the cardinal's hat that hangs from the trunk of the tree identifies the kneeling figure holding a book next to it as St. Bonaventure. Several other Franciscan saints—among whom St. Francis and St. Clare—are shown beneath the lowest branches along with Mary, St. John, and the donor of the painting.

In comparison with the scenes from the life of Christ in the panel painting of the same subject by Pacino di Bonaguida in the Accademia of Florence [Fig. 6.2], those in the *tondi* of the tree of life in Bergamo follow St. Bonaventure's

<sup>21</sup> For this work, cf. essentially Zanchi M., *La Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore: Una lettura iconographica della "Biblia Pauperum" di Bergamo* (Clusone: 2003) 89–120; Preisinger, "Lignum vitae" 137–144.

<sup>22</sup> These roundels measure about 82 centimetres in diameter.



FIGURE 6.1 *Maestro dell'Albero della Vita*, *Lignum vitae* (1342 or 1347). Fresco. Bergamo, Santa Maria Maggiore.

IMAGE © RAPHAËLE PREISINGER.

meditational work less strictly [Fig. 6.3].<sup>23</sup> Where pictorial rendition of the *Lignum vitae* was difficult—because of the conceptional character of a particular paragraph, for example—the anonymous painter in Bergamo chose to opt for iconographical solutions that could be understood even without good knowledge of the underlying text.<sup>24</sup>

In Santa Maria Maggiore in Bergamo, the general adherence to St. Bonaventure's *Lignum vitae* and the sheer size of the painting located near the choir of the church attest to the desire to convey the meditative practice described above to a lay audience. Roundels with narrative scenes such as

<sup>23</sup> The painting n. 8459 of the Accademia delle Belle Arti in Florence was executed between 1310 and 1320.

<sup>24</sup> For a detailed examination of the narrative scenes contained in the roundels of the Accademia *pala* and those of the mural painting in Bergamo, cf. Preisinger, “*Lignum vitae*” 122–135 and 137–144.

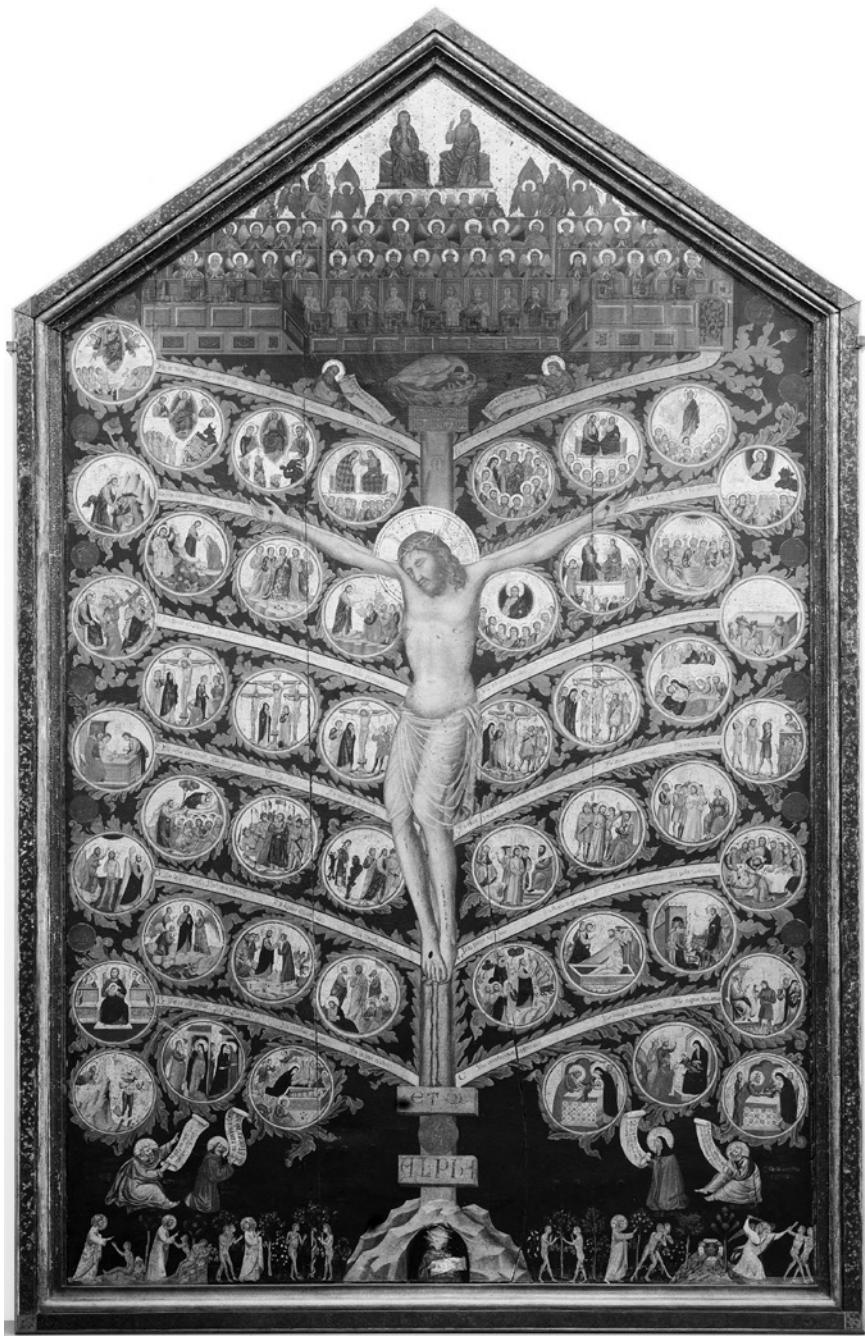


FIGURE 6.2 *Pacino di Bonaguida, Lignum vitae (1310–1320). Tempera on wood, 248 × 151 cm. Florence, Accademia delle Belle Arti (inv. no. 8459).*

IMAGE © MINISTERO DEI BENI E DELLE ATTIVITÀ CULTURALI E DEL TURISMO.

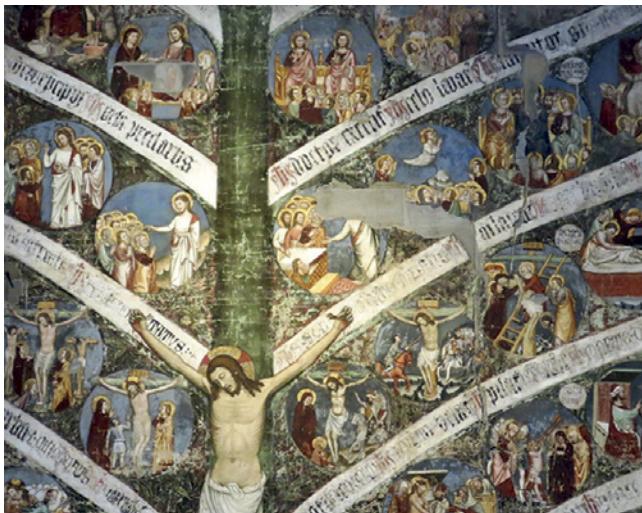


FIGURE 6.3 *Detail of Fig. 6.1: Scenes from the Life of Christ.*

the crucifixion or the deposition from the cross, but also some more unusual themes, were added to Bonaventure's scheme to indicate that, in order to reach conformity with Christ, interior visualisation of the Gospel events is necessary. It may be surmised that preachers explained the exact subject of the painting and the technique of meditation linked to it during the mass. In fact, the words legible on the original scroll held by St. Bonaventure read: 'IESUM CRISTUM PREDICAMUS CRU[CEM]'.<sup>25</sup> The figures originating from representations of the crucifixion under the cross help stimulate compassion in the viewer, just as certain figures that were added in the narrative scenes for the same purpose.<sup>26</sup> Perhaps the mural painting in Bergamo didn't serve didactic ends only but was designed to support a meditation on Christ's life and passion carried out in public in the church. The function of the painting as an aid to public meditation seems especially plausible in light of the liturgical songs that were composed on the basis of the verses from the *Lignum vitae*. In fact, a remark in a chronicle from around 1300 documents that they were sung responsorially, thus making it likely that they served as an invitation to collective meditation.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup> 'We Praise Jesus Christ the Crucified'. I thank Karl A.E. Enenkel for his help with this translation. The words on the scroll painted on top of the original one are illegible today.

<sup>26</sup> For instance, the figures of Mary and of further mourning women in the roundel dedicated to *Iesus, Pilato traditus*, aren't mentioned by St. Bonaventure; they contribute to prompting compassion for Christ in the wall painting's beholder.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Preisinger, "Lignum vitae" 40–42 and 144.

Other fourteenth-century murals depicting the *Lignum vitae* scheme in churches throughout Italy confirm that this iconography was instrumental in propagating the meditative practice linked to St. Bonaventure's treatise among lay audiences. However, a number of murals displaying this scheme are situated in religious convents, all of which are Franciscan.<sup>28</sup> In this context, the *Lignum vitae* functioned primarily as an emblem of Franciscan corporate identity.

The most famous mural painting of this type is located in the former refectory of Santa Croce in Florence and was executed by Taddeo Gaddi in the second third of the fourteenth century [Fig. 6.4]. In this work, which was above all addressed to the local Franciscan friars and their prominent guests, the main ideas of Franciscan mysticism are presented.<sup>29</sup> St. Bonaventure's *Lignum vitae* scheme unfolds in the central area of this painting [Fig. 6.5]. By means of additional scenes, attention is drawn to the anachoretic origins of the meditational practice propagated by the Franciscans and to the tensions between life *in eremo* and life in urban environments.

28 Cf. the listing of mural paintings displaying the *Lignum vitae* in Preisinger, "Lignum vitae" 247–249.

29 For this work, cf. Ladis A., *Taddeo Gaddi: Critical Reappraisal and Catalogue Raisonné* (Columbia, MI – London: 1982) 171–182 with bibliographical references up to 1981; Esmeijer A.C., *L'albero della vita di Taddeo Gaddi: L'esegesi "geometrica" di un'immagine didattica* (Florence: 1985); Belting H., "Das Bild als Text: Wandmalerei und Literatur im Zeitalter Dantes", in Belting – Blume, *Malerei und Stadtkultur in der Dantezeit* 23–64, esp. 56–58; Hatfield R., "The Tree of Life and the Holy Cross: Franciscan Spirituality in the Trecento and the Quattrocento", in Verdon T. – Henderson J. (eds.), *Christianity and the Renaissance: Image and Religious Imagination in the Quattrocento* (Syracuse, NY: 1990) 132–160, esp. 136–143; Lobbenmeier A., *Raum und Unendlichkeit: Die Perspektive als Bedeutungsträger in Florentiner Bildprogrammen des Quattrocento* (Essen: 1995) 179–184; Monstadt B., *Judas beim Abendmahl: Figurenkonstellation und Bedeutung in Darstellungen von Giotto bis Andrea del Sarto* (Munich: 1995) 139–155; Ohlig S.F., *Florentiner Refektorien: Form, Funktion und die Programme ihrer Fresken* (Egelsbach: 2000) 129–166; Quantz A.D., "At Prayer in the Shadow of the 'Tree of Life'", in Johnson T.J. (ed.), *Franciscans at Prayer* (Leiden – Boston, MA: 2007) 333–355; Simbeni A., "L'iconografia del *Lignum vitae* in Umbria nel XIV secolo e un'ipotesi su un perduto prototipo di Giotto ad Assisi", *Franciscana* 9 (2007) 149–183, esp. 176 ff.; Simbeni A., "Gli affreschi di Taddeo Gaddi nel refettorio: programma, committenza e datazione, con una postilla sulla diffusione del modello iconografico del *Lignum vitae* in Catalogna", in *Santa Croce: oltre le apparenze* (Pistoia: 2011) 113–141; Preisinger, "Lignum vitae" 154–183; Preisinger R., "Taddeo Gaddis Lebensbaum: Experimentierfreude und Innovation in Trecento", in Marek K. – Schulz M. (eds.), *Kanon Kunstgeschichte: Einführung in Werke, Methoden und Epochen* (Paderborn: 2015), vol. 1, *Mittelalter* 367–381 focusses on the spacial arrangement of the Last Supper represented beneath the central panel with the *Lignum vitae* scheme.



FIGURE 6.4 *Taddeo Gaddi, Lignum vitae (ca. 1330–1366). Fresco, ca. 11.20 × 11.70 m. Florence, Museo dell'Opera di Santa Croce.*

IMAGE © MINISTERO DEI BENI E DELLE ATTIVITÀ CULTURALI E DEL TURISMO.

The branches and fruits of the tree of life are inscribed with the verses and chapter headings of St. Bonaventure's treatise. Roundels containing the four evangelists indicate the origin of the events recounted in the *Lignum vitae*, while Old Testament figures derived from representations of the Root of Jesse are shown announcing Christ's death on the cross. St. Francis kneels at the bottom of the tree, the trunk of which transforms into the cross he is shown firmly grabbing with his hands. While the female donor of the painting is shown kneeling behind St. Francis in prayer, thus literally following him,<sup>30</sup> St. Bonaventure,

30 She is shown wearing the garb of a Franciscan tertiary and has been identified by Ladis *Taddeo Gaddi* 172–173 as a member of the Manfredi family.



FIGURE 6.5 *Detail of Fig. 6.4: Lignum vitae-scheme.*

who sits next to St. Francis, is represented composing the *Lignum vitae*. His position echoes the characterisation of the four evangelists as authors in medieval Bible illuminations, a motif central to the monastic tradition. This adds to the solemnity of his depiction and is logically consistent given that, in the *Lignum vitae*, St. Bonaventure summarises the narrative of the Gospels. The direction of St. Bonaventure's gaze indicates that his main source of inspiration, however, is St. Francis, who, in turn, is granted a direct glance at Christ crucified. Behind St. Bonaventure, two Franciscan saints, St. Anthony of Padua and St. Louis of Toulouse, are depicted to either side of St. Dominic. On the right hand side as seen from the cross, a group of figures inspired by representations of the crucifixion, composed of the fainting Mary, the apostle St. John, and three mourning women, can be seen. The at first sight puzzling combination of contemporaneous saints and Biblical figures indicates that an allegorical reading of the scene is required: while the three standing mendicant saints, all of whom are represented holding books, and St. Bonaventure, stand for the intellectual approach to the cross, the affective approach is conveyed to the viewer by the group of figures derived from crucifixion scenes. The position of the latter group indicates that this approach, typified by St. Francis, who is represented nearby, should be considered superior to the former for reaching the heights of contemplation.<sup>31</sup>

St. Francis's kneeling position under the cross is echoed by the stance he adopts in the scene of his stigmatisation on the upper left side of the mural [Fig. 6.6]. His intense gaze at the crucified seraph and the direction from which the angel is shown approaching him establish a tight link between this scene and the central panel with the *Lignum vitae* scheme. The refectory mural in Santa Croce thus presents the miraculous event that transformed St. Francis into a perfect image of Christ crucified as a consequence of St. Francis's intense meditation of the cross. In Gaddi's mural, the event by which St. Francis's conformity with Christ was accomplished, shown to have taken place in the abyssal landscape of mount Alverna, serves to posit the ideal of mystical union, which is granted only to the saints, as the faraway goal for the type of meditation epitomised by St. Bonaventure's *Lignum vitae*: the beholder of this painting is encouraged by the mnemotechnical scheme from St. Bonaventure's treatise to constantly meditate on the events of Christ's life and death and thus to move towards reaching the contemplative heights attained by saints such as St. Francis.

<sup>31</sup> In Christian iconography, the polarity between right and left is instrumental in expressing differences of value; the right side (as seen from the cross or from Christ in the Last Judgement) is always the side to which a more positive connotation is ascribed.



FIGURE 6.6 *Detail of Fig. 6.4: Stigmatisation of St. Francis.*

On the upper right side of the mural, an episode from the *Vita Benedicti* highlights the anachoretic ideals underlying Franciscan meditative practices [Fig. 6.7]. According to the Life of St. Benedict by Gregory the Great, St. Benedict retreated into a cave to live as a hermit. As a consequence of a ruse by the devil, St. Benedict is threatened with starvation. Through divine intervention, however, a priest learns of his situation and rescues him

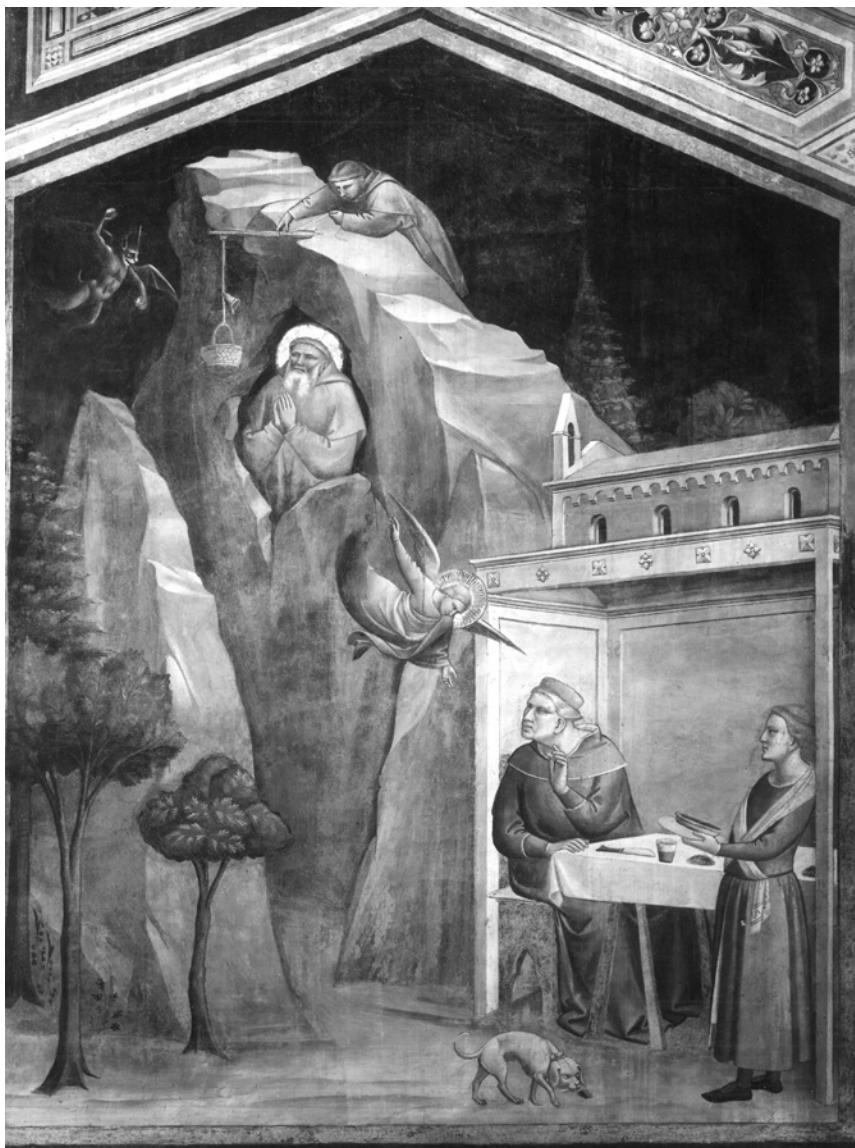


FIGURE 6.7 Detail of Fig. 6.4: Rescue of St. Benedict on Easter Day.

on Easter day.<sup>32</sup> By means of their respective positions in the overall composition of the mural and the similar landscape in which they are placed, a

<sup>32</sup> Gregor I, *De vita et miraculis venerabilis Benedicti abbatis / Leben und Wunder des ehrwürdigen Abtes Benedikt*, in *Gregor der Grosse. Der hl. Benedikt. Buch II der Dialoge. Lateinisch-Deutsch* (St. Ottilien: 1995) 102–203, I, 3–7.

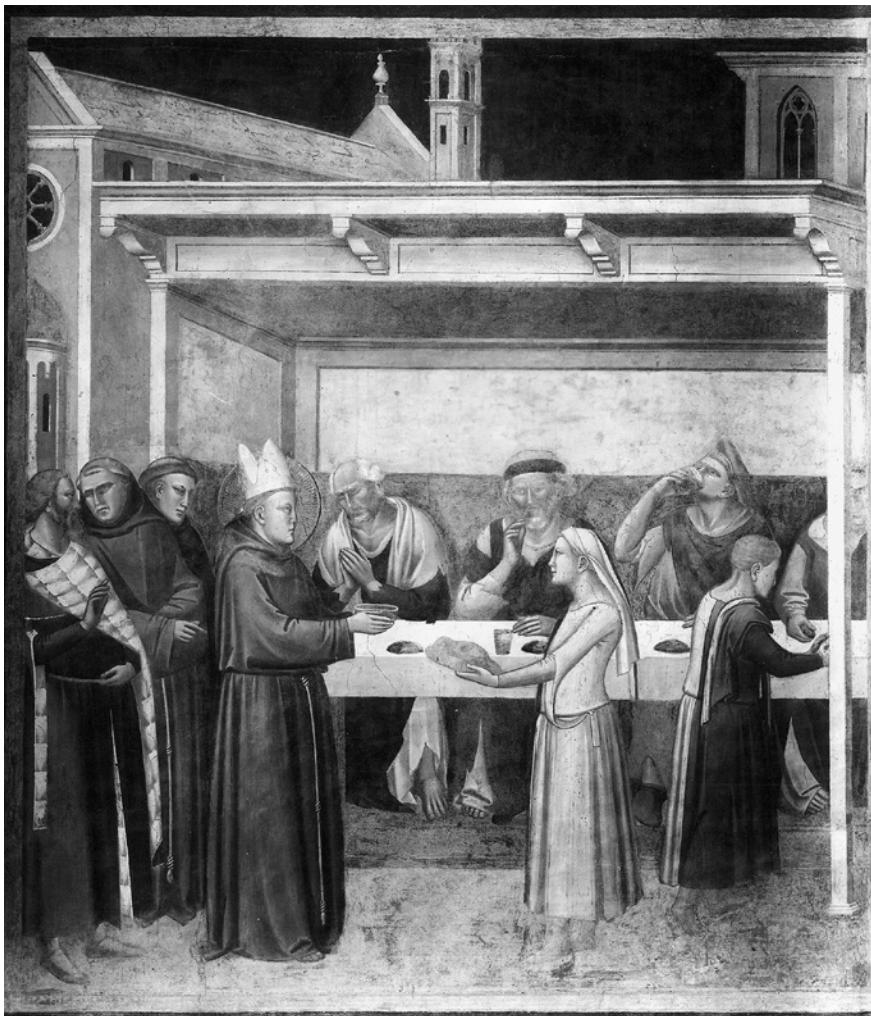


FIGURE 6.8 *Detail of Fig. 6.4: St. Louis of Toulouse Tending the Poor.*

tight link is established between this scene and that of the stigmatisation of St. Francis. Together, they highlight the contemplative aspects of religious life.

An episode from the life of St. Louis of Toulouse [Fig. 6.8] depicted below the stigmatisation scene on the lower register points to the tension between life in the city and the solitary life of hermits. This scene, which prominently displays architectural structures, shows the Franciscan saint tending the poor. It most likely refers to an event that took place in Florence in 1297, making it plausible that the figure standing directly behind St. Louis is the

Podestà.<sup>33</sup> By placing this scene directly below the stigmatisation, the tension created by the transfer of monastic forms of life and piety into urban environments is alluded to. The depiction on the walls of Franciscan convents throughout Italy of the mnemotechnical scheme devised by St. Bonaventure in the *Lignum vitae* responded to this tension by enabling the spectator to memorise the contents of St. Bonaventure's manual and thus to meditate on the cross spontaneously wherever and whenever he wished to do so.<sup>34</sup>

### The Fashioning of St. Francis and St. Dominic as Models for Contemplation in Urban Contexts

Even though not invented by the Franciscans, the type of meditation stimulated through texts such as St. Bonaventure's treatise on the tree of life attained such significance for Franciscan spirituality that eventually, a pictorial scheme derived from the *Lignum vitae* iconography showing St. Francis in the position usually occupied by Christ in this arboreal composition was developed. In the Franciscan convent of Sant'Antonio in Padua, two murals from the first decade of the fourteenth century face each other in a room adjacent to the chapter house designated by written sources as *capitulum parvum sive parlatorium*. The south wall displays a fragment of an early instance of the *Lignum vitae* iconography [Fig. 6.9]. On the opposite wall, an extensively abraded fresco centring on a large figure displays roundels containing narrative scenes around which organic forms entwine [Fig. 6.10].<sup>35</sup>

Photographs and sketches made before both murals deteriorated dramatically make it possible to reconstruct their overall compositions and even

33 Cf. *Processus Canonizationis et Legenda variae Sancti Ludovici O.F.M.*, ed. Collegium S. Bonaventurae (Quaracchi – Florence: 1951) xix and Vertova L., *I Cenacoli Fiorentini* (Turin: 1965) 21 and Plate 4. The scene depicted on the lower register underneath the episode from the life of St. Benedict is the Banquet at the House of Simon.

34 In his essay "Das Bild als Text", esp. 54–58, Hans Belting explains the relevance of mnemotechnical models derived from antiquity for the consideration of trecento mural painting. According to Belting, Taddeo Gaddi's fresco of the *Lignum vitae* in Santa Croce, Florence, is a prime example for the mnemotechnical function of trecento wall painting.

35 For these works, cf. essentially Cozzi E., "Giotto e bottega al Santo: Gli affreschi della sala Capitolare, dell'andito e delle cappelle radiali", in Baggio L. – Benetazzo M. (eds.), *Cultura, arte e committenza nella Basilica di S. Antonio di Padova nel Trecento: Convegno internazionale di studi* (Padua: 2003) 77–91; Simbeni A., "Il *Lignum vitae* sancti Francisci in due dipinti di primo trecento a Padova e Verona", *Il Santo* 46, 1–2 (2006) 185–213; Simbeni, "L'iconografia del *Lignum vitae* in Umbria" 179–182; Preisinger, "Lignum vitae" 209–233.



FIGURE 6.9 *Anon. artist, Fragment of a Lignum vitae (1302–1303). Fresco, ca. 431 × 281 cm. Padua, Basilica di Sant'Antonio, room adjacent to the chapter house.*  
IMAGE © RAPHAËLE PREISINGER.



**FIGURE 6.10** *Anon. artist, Fragment of a Lignum vitae sancti Francisci, condition before the temporary removal and conservation (1302–1309). Fresco, ca. 1160 × 672 cm. Padua, Basilica di Sant'Antonio, room adjacent to the chapter house.*

IMAGE © FOTOTECA CENTRO STUDI ANTONIANI, PADOVA.

some of their details. The painting on the south wall centred on a depiction of Christ on the cross behind which branches inscribed with the verses from St. Bonaventure's *Lignum vitae* unfolded. While this mural lacks pictorial rendition of the events recounted in the *Lignum vitae*, like in Santa Croce, figures from the Old Testament, of which three are extant, are shown surrounding the



FIGURE 6.11 *Maestro dell'Annunciazione (Maestro del Redentore?)*, Fragment of a Lignum vitae sancti Francisci (1310–1320). Fresco, ca. 590 × 637 cm. Verona, San Fermo Maggiore.

IMAGE © RAPHAËLE PREISINGER.

tree. On the opposite wall, six vine branches are arranged symmetrically on either side of a large central figure wearing the garb of a Franciscan friar. The narrative scenes contained by the tendrils displaying events from St. Francis's life—some of which are preserved to this day—suggest that this figure is most likely to be St. Francis.

The iconography of the latter fresco is echoed on the south nave wall of the formerly Franciscan church of San Fermo in Verona, of which important parts are equally lost [Fig. 6.11]. The remaining bits of the left and upper parts of this mural, which dates from the second decade of the fourteenth century, reveal that, like in the Paduan convent, roundels showing scenes from the life of St. Francis unfurl from a vine-like structure. Above this, in the central area of the painting, hovers a seraph. In the light of later compositions showing St. Francis at the centre of a tree-like structure, it seems very likely that a figure of this saint could be seen in the central area of this fresco

as well.<sup>36</sup> The bust-length figures of Franciscan friars represented at the end of the vine branches in this mural are clearly coined on the Old Testament figures of the *Lignum vitae* iconography. As a photograph of the now lost upper right corner of the *Lignum vitae sancti Francisci* in Padua reveals, they were echoed by similar figures in the Paduan version.<sup>37</sup>

The mural paintings in Padua and Verona testify to the desire to cast St. Francis as a protagonist for the devotional practice epitomised by the *Lignum vitae* not only in devotional literature, but also in trecento art. St. Francis was considered a model for the *imitatio Christi* so perfect that his life, in turn, served as a model for emulation. Perhaps the representations of scenes from his life were meant to trigger a meditation on his exemplary path similar to the meditation on Christ's earthly sojourn proposed to the reader in the *Lignum vitae*. However, the *Lignum vitae sancti Francisci* were certainly also designed to promote St. Francis's role as a religious leader and to underline the eschatological function attributed to him by the members of his order. In fact, given their parallels with the Old Testament figures in the iconography of the *Lignum vitae*, which in turn derive from the iconography of the Root of Jesse, it is probable that the figures shown pointing towards St. Francis in Padua and Verona had a comparable predicting role: indeed, as they point to the future, they most likely refer to the interpretation of St. Francis as the angel of the sixth seal of the apocalypse by St. Bonaventure.<sup>38</sup>

St. Francis's great popularity and the wide dissemination of the devotion to Christ's life promoted by the Franciscans clearly exerted pressure on the competing Dominican order. This becomes evident in view of the pictorial scheme based on the *Lignum vitae sancti Francisci* developed by the Dominicans. In the *Chiostro verde* of the Dominican convent of Santa Maria Novella in Florence, an extensively abraded mural presumably dating from the second half of the fourteenth century recalls the Franciscan iconography [Fig. 6.12].<sup>39</sup>

36 A tapestry in the museum of the basilica of San Francesco in Assisi from the second half of the fifteenth century features an organic composition in the midst of which St. Francis is shown receiving the *stigmata*. Other examples include the colour woodcut of the *Rosarium beati Francisci* from 1484 in the Graphische Sammlung Albertina in Vienna (inv. no. 1930/190) and a panel painting from the fifteenth century by a Flemish painter in the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Tournai. In these two works, however, the seraph is omitted and St. Francis receives the *stigmata* directly from the crucified Christ shown above him on the tree. Cf. Preisinger, "Lignum vitae" 220–223.

37 This photograph is reproduced in *ibidem* 224, fig. 65.

38 For more details on how to imagine the predicting role of the friars cf. Preisinger, "Lignum vitae" 230–232.

39 To date, this fresco has been left almost unstudied. For a brief appreciation of this work cf. Lunardi R., *Arte e storia in Santa Maria Novella: Per un museo fiorentino di arte sacra* (Florence: 1983) 37–38 and Cannon J., *Religious Poverty, Visual Riches: Art in the Dominican*



FIGURE 6.12 *Anon. artist, Lignum sancti Dominici, condition before the flood of 1966 and subsequent removal and conservation (second half of the fourteenth century). Fresco. Florence, Santa Maria Novella, Chiostro Verde.*

IMAGE © MINISTERO DEI BENI E DELLE ATTIVITÀ CULTURALI E DEL TURISMO.

It shows St. Dominic amidst a tree-like structure with twelve branches arranged symmetrically on either side of a large trunk. Strikingly, St. Dominic is endowed with two red angelic wings [Fig. 6.13]. Above St. Dominic, the trunk of the tree, which is adorned with eight symmetrically arranged flowers, turns into the cross with Christ crucified, above which the sun, the moon, and the dove symbolising the Holy Spirit are shown. The branches and flowers were once inscribed with texts as were the books and parchments held by the figures. Furthermore, the roundels containing bust-length figures hanging from the tree formerly featured the names of the respective figures. Nearly all inscriptions are lost or illegible today and only four of the narrative scenes represented in the *tondi* to the right of the cross are still identifiable by approximation [Fig. 6.14]. Hanging from the third branch (reading from bottom to top), the second roundel from the left displays an event from the life of St. Dominic that was perhaps never represented before: it shows the conversion of heretical women by St. Dominic and the subsequent escape of the devil

*Churches of Central Italy in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (New Haven, CT – London: 2013) 185–186 and also the very brief mention in Verdon T. (ed.), *Santa Maria Novella* (Florence: 2003) 96–97.



FIGURE 6.13 *Anon. artist, Lignum sancti Dominici (second half of the fourteenth century). Fresco. Florence, Santa Maria Novella, Chiostro Verde. Detail with St. Dominic.*  
IMAGE © RAPHAËLE PREISINGER.



FIGURE 6.14 Anon. artist, *Lignum sancti Dominici* (second half of the fourteenth century). Fresco. Florence, Santa Maria Novella, Chiostro Verde. Detail with Scenes from the Life of St. Dominic.

IMAGE © RAPHAËLE PREISINGER.

with the aid of a rope hanging from a bell tower.<sup>40</sup> This scene was important for the history of the Dominican order, for some of these women were believed to have joined the religious community founded by St. Dominic for women, which laid the foundation for the Order of Dominican women.<sup>41</sup> The *tondo*

<sup>40</sup> Following the account in the *Legenda aurea* (Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea*, trans. J. Laager (Zurich: 2000) 282), a repugnant dog-sized figure resembling a male cat with big fiery eyes, a large bloody tongue and a short tail leaped out of the women's midst to reveal to them which master they had served until their conversion. In the Chiostro Verde fresco, St. Dominic is accompanied by a Dominican friar and the devilish figure is shown twice: once standing in front of the women to display his ugliness and once escaping the scene by the bell tower. This episode was represented again by Bernardino Pocetti in the narrative cycle of the Chiostro grande of Santa Maria Novella, ca. 1582–1584. For Pocettis fresco and further textual sources recounting this event, cf. Assman P., *Dominkanerheilige und der verbotene Savonarola: Die Freskoausstattung des "Chiostro Grande" im Kloster Santa Maria Novella in Florenz, ein kulturelles Phänomen des späten Manierismus* (Mainz – Munich: 1997) 146–147.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Assman, *Dominkanerheilige und der verbotene Savonarola* 70–71.

directly above might represent the resuscitation of a nephew of the cardinal of Fossa Nova by St. Dominic.<sup>42</sup> Probably the middle roundel hanging from the fifth branch shows the vesting of Magister Conradus by St. Dominic.<sup>43</sup> Directly on top of this, a *tondo* displays a resuscitation scene that was believed to have occurred as a consequence of St. Dominic's prayer.<sup>44</sup> On the left side of the cross, three roundels arranged on top of each other, of which the lower two are extensively abraded, once displayed images of the evangelists St. Mark, St. John, and St. Luke writing the texts of their respective Gospels.<sup>45</sup> At the tip of the branches, on either side of this scheme, five Dominican friars are represented with open books and prophetic gestures while at the end of the top two branches, St. Jerome on the right and another holy figure on the left, perhaps St. John the Baptist, can be seen.

The puzzling representation of St. Dominic with wings is unique in trecento iconography and requires a careful interpretation. Quite evidently, this composition echoes the wings of the seraph in the stigmatisation of St. Francis. Given the dependence of the overall pictorial scheme on the Franciscan *Ligna vitae sancti Francisci*, the competition between Dominicans and Franciscans regarding the 'angelic' role attributed to their respective founders needs to be accounted for. In the eleventh *canto* dedicated to Paradise in the Divine Comedy, Dante Alighieri describes St. Francis and St. Dominic as two princely fellows. By reason of his passionate love for Christ crucified, St. Francis is characterised

<sup>42</sup> This is suggested by the figure in the centre who wears a cardinal's robe and hat. St. Dominic, who is accompanied by a Dominican friar, is shown bending towards a smaller figure, of which only the face and one hand are extant, who reaches out to him. The *Legenda aurea* (Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea* 280) is very brief on this episode. The narrative cycle of the Chiostro grande of Santa Maria Novella includes a mural painting by Alessandro Fei, ca. 1582–1584, showing this event. For Fei's fresco and further textual sources cf. Assman, *Dominkanerheilige und der verbotene Savonarola* 166–167.

<sup>43</sup> If the figure on the far left was haloed—which seems to be the case—then it must be St. Dominic; if this is correct, it seems very likely that the episode depicted is that of the vesting of Magister Conradus from Germany, which, according to the *Legenda aurea*, many friars had been wishing for. Cf. Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea* 283–284.

<sup>44</sup> On the left, St. Dominic, accompanied by a Dominican friar, is shown praying. On the right, a figure dressed in a red garment (perhaps a knight?) seems to be returning to life thanks to the intervention of two angels represented above.

<sup>45</sup> Hanging from the third branch from the bottom on the left side, a roundel inscribed 'S-MARCUS' containing a partially erased lion on the right bears a haloed figure of St. Mark. The *tondi* represented directly beneath him must have contained similar representations of the evangelists St. John, whose attribute the eagle is still recognisable on the left (shown hanging from the second branch), and St. Luke, whose attribute the bull is barely discernible on the right (shown hanging from the first branch).

as 'tutto serafico in ardore'. St. Dominic in contrast is distinguished by his wisdom, which has made him 'di cherubica luce uno splendore'.<sup>46</sup> According to the conceptualisation of angelic choirs developed by Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite in his *Hierarchia coelestis*, which was still very influential in the later Middle Ages, seraphim and cherubim stand at the top of the celestial hierarchy.<sup>47</sup> However, the seraphim, characterised by their ardent love, occupy the upmost rank. It seems that by choosing the red colour characteristic of the seraphim for the rendition of St. Dominic's angelic wings, the Dominicans of Santa Maria Novella were eager to assert seraphic properties for their order's founder and thus to make him equal to St. Francis with respect to his significance at the end time.<sup>48</sup>

The pictorial fashioning of St. Francis as the protagonist of the meditation on the life of Christ, which is manifest in the refectory mural of Santa Croce through the way in which St. Francis's stigmatisation is shown in conjunction with the *Lignum vitae* scheme and evident in the very iconography of the *Ligna vitae sancti Francisci* in Padua and Verona, corresponds to hagiographical writings and doesn't seem surprising in light of the affective approach to the cross promoted by Franciscan piety. The characterisation of St. Dominic, who stands for a much more rational way of approximating faith, in a similar light in the *Chiostro verde* fresco, however, is at first glance very surprising.

Certainly, the Dominicans often adapted iconographies developed by the Franciscans and other mendicant orders to their own needs.<sup>49</sup> Given the audience to which the mural painting in the cloister of Santa Maria Novella was

46 Dante, *La divina commedia*, ed. E. Laaths, *La vita nuova, La divina commedia/Das neue Leben, Die Göttliche Komedie* (Berlin: 1960) Paradiso, 11. Cf. the indication of this passage by Lunardi, *Arte e storia* 37.

47 The hierarchy described in the *Hierarchia coelestis* was interpreted in the thirteenth century by Jacobus de Voragine in the *Legenda Aurea* and influenced Dante's description of angelic choirs in the *Divina Commedia*. Cf. Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *De coelesti hierarchia*, ed. G. Heil – A.M. Ritter, *Corpus Dionysiacum II: Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita, De coelesti hierarchia, De ecclesiastica hierarchia, De mystica theologia, Epistulae* (Berlin – New York, NY: 1991).

48 By contrast, cherubs are generally attributed the colour blue. However, as the depiction of the cherub guarding the gate to the Garden of Eden in the Genesis cycle of the cathedral of Monreale in Sicily shows, on occasion, cherubs were also attributed a red colour.

49 The repetition of a design developed by the Augustinian Hermits underlying the iconography of the so-called 'Glorification of the Wisdom of St. Thomas Aquinas's Doctrines' on the left wall of the 'Spanish Chapel' of Santa Maria Novella is surely the most conspicuous instance of such an adaptation. Cf. Hansen D., *Das Bild des Ordenslehrers und die Allegorie des Wissens: Ein gemaltes Programm der Augustiner* (Berlin: 1995).

addressed, which, as was the case for Gaddi's fresco in the refectory of Santa Croce, consisted of friars and the civic community alike, the specific way in which St. Dominic is shown reveals the desire to elevate him to a similarly paradigmatic status for devotional practice and to cast him in a comparably appealing and fascinating light as that in which St. Francis appeared, which was particularly comprehensible given the harsh competition regarding souls and financial resources alike between the Dominicans and Franciscans in Florence.

### Conclusion

The rise in importance of the scripturally based meditational practices promoting compassion with Christ described in this essay and the surrogate function of these devotional practices with regard to the merits of life in seclusion correspond to a major renewal in the Christian mystical tradition. While early medieval mysticism was ridden by the notion that, in order to encounter God, it is necessary to withdraw from the world and join a spiritual elite in cloistered seclusion, the thirteenth century marks the beginning of a process allowing essentially any Christian following the path of the saints to gain access to mystical experience and to encounter God in the secular realm and even amidst the turmoil of everyday life. However, this shift was accompanied by sustained tensions between those who adhered to this new understanding of the premises for mystical experience and those who still claimed that life in seclusion was a necessary prerequisite for it.<sup>50</sup>

The mendicants laid claim to the merits of seclusion even though they operated in urban environments. Meditation techniques that compensated the threats of life in the city allowed them to spiritually follow the path of the suffering Christ and thus contributed to acquiring the detachment from the world—a condition that might be described as an 'inner solitude'—for which they strove. 'Disappropriation of self' was central to the monastic interpretation of the ideal of *imitatio Christi* from its very beginnings<sup>51</sup> and was considered to be at the core of the transformation undergone by St. Francis, concretely brought about by his passionate love for Christ crucified, before he received the *stigmata*—the marks that converted him into the perfect image of Christ

<sup>50</sup> Cf. McGinn B., *The Flowering of Mysticism: Men and Women in the New Mysticism (1200–1350)*, *The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism* 3 (New York, NY: 1998) 12–14.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Viller M. – Olphe-Galliard M., "L'ascèse chrétienne", in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique*, vol. 1 (Paris: 1937) 960–977.

crucified. In the *Legenda maior*, St. Bonaventure contrasts the psychological state reached by St. Francis with physical martyrdom,<sup>52</sup> thus attributing the inner components of self-abnegation as part of the imitation of Christ greater importance than its physical aspects. The condition that was to be striven for corresponded to the process of spiritually 'dying to self' demanded from the reader by St. Bonaventure at the outset of the *Lignum vitae*.

Trecento murals in convents and churches throughout Italy attest to the importance devotion to the life of Christ and the mystical concepts associated with it acquired for members of religious orders and the lay population alike. While St. Bonaventure's *Lignum vitae* was addressed to an erudite readership, the mural paintings displaying the mnemotechnical scheme developed in his treatise were geared toward a much broader audience and adopted different functions according to the locations in which they were shown. However different these settings were, the diverse paintings all contributed to imprinting the life of Christ as a model for the Christian to follow onto the minds of their spectators. They also remind us that, aside from the written or spoken word, but sometimes also in conjunction with it, images were instrumental in conveying religious norms to the minds of urban societies.

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<sup>52</sup> Bonaventura, *Legenda maior sancti Francisci*, chapter XIII.3.

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## Constructing the Imaginary Desert of the Soul in Emblematic Literature

*Agnès Guiderdoni*

Ainsi, Philothée, nos coeurs doivent prendre et choisir quelque place chaque jour, ou sur le mont de Calvaire, ou ès plaies de Notre-Seigneur, ou en quelque autre lieu proche de lui, pour y faire leur retraite à toutes sortes d'occasions, et là s'alléger et récréer entre les affaires extérieures, et pour y être comme dans un fort, afin de se défendre des tentations. [...] Resouvenez-vous donc, Philothée, de faire toujours plusieurs retraites en la solitude de votre cœur, pendant que corporellement vous êtes parmi les conversations et affaires ; et cette solitude mentale ne peut nullement être empêchée par la multitude de ceux qui vous sont autour, car ils ne sont pas autour de votre cœur, ains autour de votre corps, si que votre cœur demeure lui tout seul en la présence de Dieu seul. [...] Et aussi les conversations ne sont pas ordinairement si sérieuses qu'on ne puisse de temps en temps en retirer le cœur pour le remettre en cette divine solitude. Les père et mère de sainte Catherine de Sienne lui ayant ôté toute commodité du lieu et de loisir pour prier et méditer, Notre-Seigneur l'inspira de faire un petit oratoire intérieur en son esprit, dedans lequel se retirant mentalement, elle pût parmi les affaires extérieures vaquer à cette sainte solitude cordiale. Et depuis, quand le monde l'attaquait, elle n'en recevait nulle incommodité, parce, disait-elle, qu'elle s'enfermoit dans son cabinet intérieur [...]. Retirez donc quelquefois votre esprit dedans votre cœur, où séparée de tous les hommes, vous puissiez traiter cœur à cœur de votre ame avec son Dieu [...].

So, Philothée, our hearts should take and chose some place each day, either on Mount Calvary, or in the wounds of our Lord, or some other place close to him, to retreat on all sorts of occasions, and there, to alleviate and recreate ourselves from mundane affairs and stay there as in a fortress in order to defend ourselves from temptations [...].

Do remember then, Philothée, to frequently retreat several times a day in the solitude of your heart while you are corporeally engaged in conversations and social duties. That solitude need not be in any way hindered

by the crowds which surround you—they surround your body, not your soul, and your heart remains alone in the Sole Presence of God. [...] There are few social duties of sufficient importance to prevent an occasional retirement of the heart into this sacred solitude. When S. Catherine of Siena was deprived by her parents of any place or time for prayer and meditation, Our Lord inspired her with the thought of making a little interior oratory in her mind, into which she could retire in heart, and so enjoy a holy solitude amid her outward duties. And henceforward, when the world assaulted her, she was able to be indifferent, because, so she said, she could retire within her secret oratory [...].

Retire then sometimes your spirit into your heart, where, separated from all men, your soul may be in conversation with God.<sup>1</sup>

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This quotation, taken from the *Introduction à la vie dévote* (*Introduction to the Devout Life*) by Francis de Sales (1567–1622), from the chapter “On Spiritual Retirement”, could be the emblem of this short essay in which I would like to explore the representation of “mental solitude” and “spiritual retreat” as it developed in meditative emblematics at the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth centuries.

### “Mental Hermitage” and “Spiritual Retreat”

There are good reasons to start the reflection on mental solitude and spiritual retreat with Francis de Sales as he is one of the first—if not the first—in the early modern period to develop a full-fledged Christian ‘manière de vivre’ destined for lay people staying in the worldly society, in keeping with the fashion of the time that sees physical retreat in deserts, certainly as a pious attitude for clerics, but as a rather barbaric option for lay persons. What is particularly interesting in the Salesian conception of mental retreat is the fact that he expounds at the same time on the idea of what spiritual retirement is or should be, and on the form it may take, under the image of the heart as the hermitage for the soul.

<sup>1</sup> François de Sales, *Introduction à la vie dévote*, ed. A. Ravier (Paris: 1969) 96–97. My translation and my italics.

Francis de Sales addresses the issue of spiritual retreat both in his *Introduction to the Devout Life* and in his more mystical *Traité de l'amour de Dieu* (*Treatise on the Love of God*). In the *Introduction*, practising mental solitude means devoting some time of one's day to withdraw within oneself to pray to God quietly.<sup>2</sup> As the quotation introducing this essay shows, Francis de Sales uses the metaphor of the heart to formalise this withdrawal. In the *Treatise*, he defines mental solitude in Book vi, devoted to exercises of Divine Love in the prayer ('Des exercices du saint amour en l'oraison').<sup>3</sup> There, mental solitude is the prerequisite for contemplation and prayer ('oraison'). Whereas, in the *Introduction*, Francis gives practical details as to how to practise such a retreat by way of oration and meditation, in the *Treatise*, he focuses more specifically on the 'amorous recollection of the soul in contemplation' ('recueillement amoureux de l'âme en la contemplation'), where the soul answers the call of God and has renounced all desires.<sup>4</sup>

Already in what is known as his *Spiritual Exercises*, written around 1590 while a student at the university of Padua (about fifteen years earlier than the *Introduction*), Francis had formalised this spiritual hermitage in his second rule entitled "Rules for Spending the Day Well":

[P]artant je destineray tous les jours certain tems pour ce sacré sommeil, a ce que mon ame, a l'imitation du bienaymé Disciple, dorme en toute assurance sur l'amiable poitrine (Jn 13,23 ; 21,20), voire dans le cœur amoureux de l'amoureux Sauveur. [...] aussy donneray je ordre que mon ame, en ce tems la, se retire tout a faict en soy mesme [...].<sup>5</sup>

Therefore, I will allot a certain time each day for this sacred sleep [that is, spiritual repose] so that my soul, in imitation of the beloved disciple, will repose with complete confidence on the lovable breast, actually *in the loving heart*, of the loving Saviour. [...] So I will order my soul during this time to retire entirely into itself [...].<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Ibidem 96–98 and 199–202.

<sup>3</sup> François de Sales, *Traité de l'amour de Dieu*, ed. A. Ravier (Paris: 1969) 607 ff.

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem 628.

<sup>5</sup> François de Sales, *Œuvres de saint François de Sales [...] édition complète [...] publiée par les soins des religieuses de la Visitation du 1<sup>er</sup> monastère d'Annecy*, 27 vols. (Annecy: 1892–1964), vol. 22, 28.

<sup>6</sup> François de Sales, *Spiritual Exercises*, trans. W.N. Dougherty, ed. J.F. Chorpenning (Toronto: 2000) 31. My emphasis.

The idea of inward solitude is well known in the ascetic and eremitic tradition. It is neither new nor specific to the Christian tradition. Greek and Roman antiquity developed an intimate conception of religious life, aptly summed up in the Greek formula “anachorein eis eauton” (“to retire into oneself”). The treatise by Dio Chrysostome, *De Secessu* (or *Peri anachoreseos*) (*On Retirement*), translated into Latin and edited by Isaac Casaubon in Paris in 1604, presents a catalogue of profane and religious retreats, in which true eremitism is defined as the withdrawal into one's inward thoughts, away from the noise of the world. This tradition is revitalised in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>7</sup> There are a multitude of books dealing with this specific kind of solitude, which is in keeping with a more individual model of spiritual as well as social life. The Salesian notion of ‘dévotion civile’ is certainly one of the most representative propositions of this new model, addressed at lay people at the beginning of the seventeenth century in France. It suggests to stay in the worldly society and change it by adopting a Christian life among the vanities of that world, instead of fleeing it, in quest of a physical retreat.

Francis's follower and first biographer, also a prolific novelist, Jean-Pierre Camus (1584–1652), the bishop of Belley, published a book specifically on this topic in 1640. Entitled *La Solitude intérieure* (*The Internal Solitude*), it was directly inspired by the writings of Francis de Sales. Camus also devoted several of his numerous novels to stories of hermits and anachorites.<sup>8</sup> In his treatise on solitude, like Francis de Sales, he differentiates mental solitude from material solitude ('solitude locale'), favouring the first one. However, Camus goes one step further than Francis de Sales in his definition:

Mental solitude is incomparably better to reach this good [the spirit of God] and to listen to what God wants to tell to the interior of our soul [...]. For what holier solitude can one wish than to have the soul void of all desire for created things, in order to adhere to God alone [...].<sup>9</sup>

Camus continues to explain how the passions and all the faculties of the soul must be appeased and silenced in this solitude, in which the soul ascends ‘beyond itself’ to be ‘united to the Creator’,<sup>10</sup> and how ‘we “empty” ourselves of all

7 On this brief genealogy, see Beugnot B., *Le Discours de la retraite au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle: Loin du monde et du bruit* (Paris: 1996) 228–230.

8 These were all published around 1623, e.g. *Hermiante*, *Spiridion*, *anachorète de l'Apennin*, and his six-volume novel, *Alexis*.

9 Camus Jean-Pierre, *La Solitude intérieure* (Paris, G. Alliot: 1640) 3 (my translation).

10 Ibidem 6.

created things and of ourselves'.<sup>11</sup> What Camus presents is properly a mystical union. He also gives some precision about the 'spiritual hermitage', which should 'be built inside one's self and in the noblest faculties, the intellect and the will'.<sup>12</sup> He finally goes as far as reversing the values between the desert and the world: the world is the real solitude and desert that we are going through in order to reach the only valuable inhabited place in heaven.<sup>13</sup>

Clearly, Camus equates spiritual retirement to the final stage of the contemplative life. This is pushed even further by another priest around the same period, Hubert Jaspart (1582–ca. 1655) (said to be 'a solitary priest', thus a hermit himself) in his *Solitude intérieure (The Internal Solitude)* published in Mons in 1643. Jaspart defines mental solitude as 'a simple and continuous gaze into the will of God' ('un simple et continu regard dans la volonté divine') which is word for word the definition of the contemplative life given by the English Capuchin Benoît de Canfield in his *Rule of Perfection* published between 1608 and 1610.<sup>14</sup> From the simple withdrawal within one's self—the Salesian advice to Philothée—spiritual retreat has become an 'inward solitude' inhabited by a 'solitary soul', where it finds its own abandonment and annihilation in God. While Francis de Sales was very practical and offered three possible spiritual hermitages (at Calvary, in the cowshed of the Nativity, and at the Ascension),<sup>15</sup> which were actually imaginary places of meditation or mental images, Jaspart offered an empty space or rather a complete void.

The mental hermitage is then ultimately a place devoid of all images, of all created things. In order to understand what is at stake here, we need to recover the subtext of such a conception, which is the 're-figuration' of the soul *ad similitudinem Dei*. To be in a spiritual solitude is to experience divine repose,<sup>16</sup> which is to achieve the ultimate conformation and become the image of God. The definition and functioning of the spiritual hermitage is then a matter of mental imagery. In this perspective, meditation and solitude are closely interconnected: seeking inward solitude and building an imaginary hermitage make sense within a meditative scheme, which should ultimately lead to contemplation, where ascetism and mysticism meet, and to the conformation of the essence of the soul to the essence of God.

<sup>11</sup> Ibidem 7.

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem 14.

<sup>13</sup> Ibidem 31–32.

<sup>14</sup> Benoît de Canfield, *La Règle de perfection*, ed. J. Orcibal (Paris: 1982) 439.

<sup>15</sup> François de Sales, *Introduction* 98.

<sup>16</sup> François de Sales, *Traité* 629.

Placing the hermitage within the soul sets the scene immediately on a mystical level, transforming ascetism or eremitism into spiritual poverty. Therefore, the hermitage becomes the place of the union with God, the mystical meeting point. It changes the nature of the hermitage, which becomes a mental image as well as an empty space—a difficult object to represent and even to conceive.

### Representing the Spiritual Hermitage

The Jesuit Father Louis Richeome (1544–1625) offered a solution in his *Tableaux sacrez des figures mystiques* (*Holy Pictures of the Mystical Figures*), in which he explains how to build a mental oratory.<sup>17</sup> His explanation should help us understand this passage from the mental image of the hermitage to its material representation.

The book is composed of fourteen plates depicting the prefiguration of the sacrament in the Old Testament and its institution in the New Testament. Each picture is accompanied by a long ekphrasis that explains in detail the plate and gives its exegesis. In the dedicatory epistle to the Queen of France, Mary of Medici, Richeome describes in pictorial terms how the pictures were made: the Old Testament and the Creation (the two main manifestations of God to men) were the sketches, or the outlines of these pictures; Christ then added the ‘bright colours’ (*les vives couleurs*) to these old drawings. He gave body, life, and speech to the original drawings. Richeome suggests to Mary of Medici to have these drawings painted and embroidered into tapestries for her private oratory. One must understand, however, that these ‘drawings’ are all textual; Richeome is not talking about the actual plates in his book, but he is dealing with biblical (and exegetical) figures. He then goes on to describe the various possible ‘usages’ of these ‘figures’ (the first being the material tapestries). In contemplating these tapestries that represent prefigurations of the Eucharist, she will contemplate ‘as in mirrors’, the sacrament itself through several objects of which she will make ‘a spiritual tapestry’ in order to increase her love for God. In other words, the material tapestries will help the memory to recall the sacred history, by the repeated contemplation of which the intellect will be able to incarnate the sacrament (the Eucharist), so that her love of God could be fed. The spiritual oratory in which the queen will retire for prayer and contemplation is all lined with memorial figurative representations of something that cannot be represented as such. The biblical figure, which can be “divided”

<sup>17</sup> Richeome Louis, *Tableaux sacrez des figures mystiques, du tres-auguste sacrifice et sacrement de l'Eucharistie* (Paris, Laurent Sonnius: 1601).

(so to say) into a material literal part (the real tapestries) and a spiritual figurative part (the spiritual tapestries), is the convenient and ingenious device to build the mental oratory that will circumvent the impossibility of representing the place of contemplation—this impossible mystical image. Richeome used memory to lead spiritually the meditant “behind” the image, where it is literally impossible to see.

As one can see, the innermost place (the heart, the oratory, be it physical or mental) is always, at some point, full of images, which should ultimately, and paradoxically, help to overcome the images that hinder access to God. This process is masterfully deployed in the *Cor Jesu amanti sacrum*, a series of eighteen copperplates, engraved by Anton II Wierix, ‘towards the end of the sixteenth or early seventeenth century’ in Antwerp.<sup>18</sup>

This set should certainly be read within the Flemish tradition of didactic and devotional images, even though nothing is known about the context of the commission, creation, and execution.<sup>19</sup> The plates represent the operations

<sup>18</sup> Hollstein's Dutch and Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts ca. 1450–1700: The Wierix Family, Part III, compiled by Ruyven-Zeman Z. van (Rotterdam: 2003) 44 and nos. 445–461; Mauquoy-Hendrickx M., *Les Estampes des Wierix conservées au cabinet des estampes de la Bibliothèque royale Albert Ier: Catalogue raisonné enrichi de notes prises dans diverses autres collections*, 4 vols. (Brussels: 1978–1983), nos. 429–446; Praz M., *Studies in Seventeenth-Century Imagery* (Rome: 1964) 407–408 and 535 (bibliography volume) and 152–155 (text volume); Dekoninck R., *Ad Imaginem: Statuts et fonctions de l'image dans la littérature spirituelle jésuite éditée à Anvers entre 1585 et 1640* (Geneva: 2005) 361–363; Göttler C., *Last Things: Art and the Religious Imagination in the Age of Reform* (Turnhout: 2010) 178–192; Guiderdoni A., *La Figure emblématique: Emblèmes, herméneutique et spiritualité (1540–1740)* (Paris: 2018 (in press)).

<sup>19</sup> [Antoine II Wierix] semble être celui des trois frères qui a le plus volontiers usé de ce symbole, quoique toutes les images des Wierix qui comportent des coeurs ne soient pas de lui. A-t-il dessiné lui-même la série du *Cor Jesu*? A-t-elle, ce qui est probable, été conçue dans la succession de ses opérations mystico-pratiques par un père de la Compagnie de Jésus, comme tend à le laisser penser sa réutilisation constante dans des ouvrages dus à des jésuites? A-t-elle été dessinée par un autre artiste et seulement gravée par Wierix? Ce n'est pas impossible puisque nous connaissons l'existence d'estampes semblables qui portent la signature de T. Galle pour le dessin et de C. de Mallory pour la gravure, et qu'une série [...] porte les signatures de Jean Galle et de Charles de Mallory. La famille Galle fut donc, tôt ou tard, associée à l'entreprise du *Cor Jesu* et nous savons par ailleurs qu'elle avait fait travailler les Wierix. [...] Plus ou moins complète, parfois amputée de quelques pièces, parfois augmentée de créations nouvelles, reproduite en copies identiques ou en contreparties inversées, présentée dans des ordres variables, la série du *Cor Jesu amanti sacrum* connaît de multiples avatars [...]. Sauvy A., *Le Miroir du cœur: Quatre siècles d'images savantes et populaires* (Paris: 1989) 62.

of Christ as a child in the Christian heart. The frame is always the same: a large stylised heart in which the scene takes place, a six-verse epigram in Latin underneath. The plates are not numbered and none of the series that I have been able to check has the same order. The series unfolds, however, some kind of narrative that is rather obvious to reconstruct even if some images are interchangeable. Following the order presented in the Hollstein catalogue,<sup>20</sup> the story unfolds thus. The title page shows a burning heart, born by several characters, among which, in the foreground, a Jesuit and a Capuchin (and not just a Franciscan as it is often said—a detail which may prove significant as we shall see) (1) [Fig. 7.1]. The heart is then the object of a fight between the angels who hold it from the top, and the mundane temptations, embodied by the Devil and Vanity, who both try to capture it (2). At last free from evil, the heart is pierced by the arrows of the Christ Child, who is at the same time Divine Love (3) [Fig. 7.2]. Once the conquest of the heart is achieved, its conversion can begin, which means its transformation into a refuge for the Godhead. The Christ Child can then knock at the heart's door to enter it, like the Bridegroom in the *Song of Songs* (4). Inside, the heart is dark and dirty, full of vermin (5) [Fig. 7.3]. Then the Divine Child sweeps away these 'monsters' ('monstra') (6), purifies and blesses the heart (7), sets it ablaze from within (8) [Fig. 7.4], and spreads flowers by the handful (9). The Christ Child sleeps peacefully while the storm is raging outside (10), after which he brings in the instruments of his Passion (11), by which he becomes the fountain of all graces, purifying little souls in the form of statues (12) [Fig. 7.5]. He can then read and preach (13) [Fig. 7.6], sing, accompanied by a choir of angels (14) [Fig. 7.7], and play the harp (15) [Fig. 7.8]. He is a painter of the Last Things, thus imprinting the eschatological goal in the heart (16) [Fig. 7.9], and has become again the king of the place (17) [Fig. 7.10]. Lastly, at the top of its glory, the heart is adorned with palms (18).

Such devotional images were very common in the Low Countries at the end of the sixteenth century. Thus, other isolated plates or shorter series by the Wierix brothers show a similar emblematic quality<sup>21</sup> but they do not have the scope and consistency of the *Cor Jesu amanti sacrum*. Above all, they do not seem to have produced the outstanding posterity one can observe here, which demonstrates the evocative power of the series and its versatility. If nothing (that is, no explicit text) identifies the nature of the original series as emblematic, it has been widely reused, however, in the emblematic field.

<sup>20</sup> Hollstein's *Dutch and Flemish Etchings* 44 and nos. 445–461.

<sup>21</sup> See *ibidem*, nos. 464–468 and 521–526.

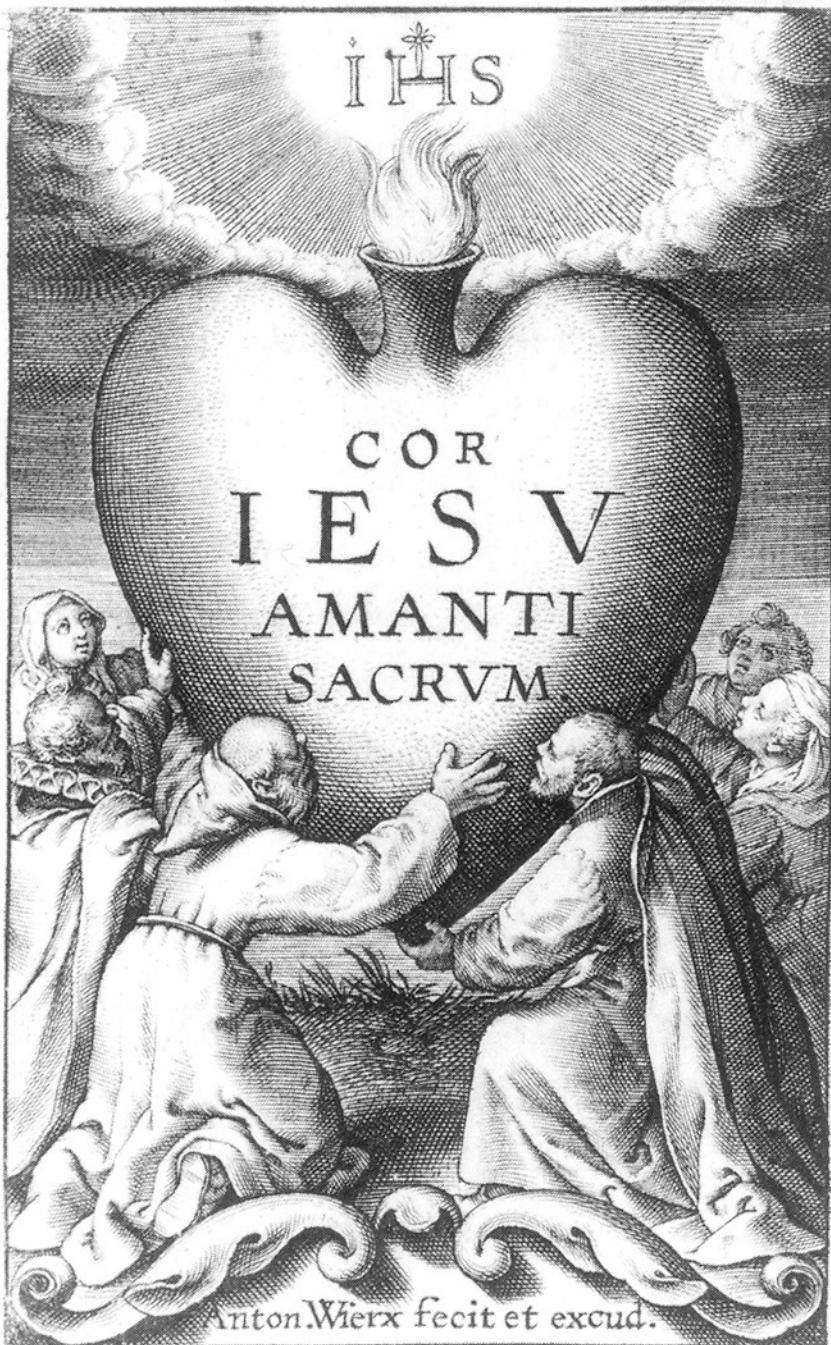


FIGURE 7.1 Anton Wierix the Younger, Title page to *Cor Jesu amanti sacrum* (ca. 1586).  
Engraving, 93 x 59 cm. Brussels, Royal Library of Belgium (inv. no. A 1269).  
IMAGE © ROYAL LIBRARY OF BELGIUM, BRUSSELS.

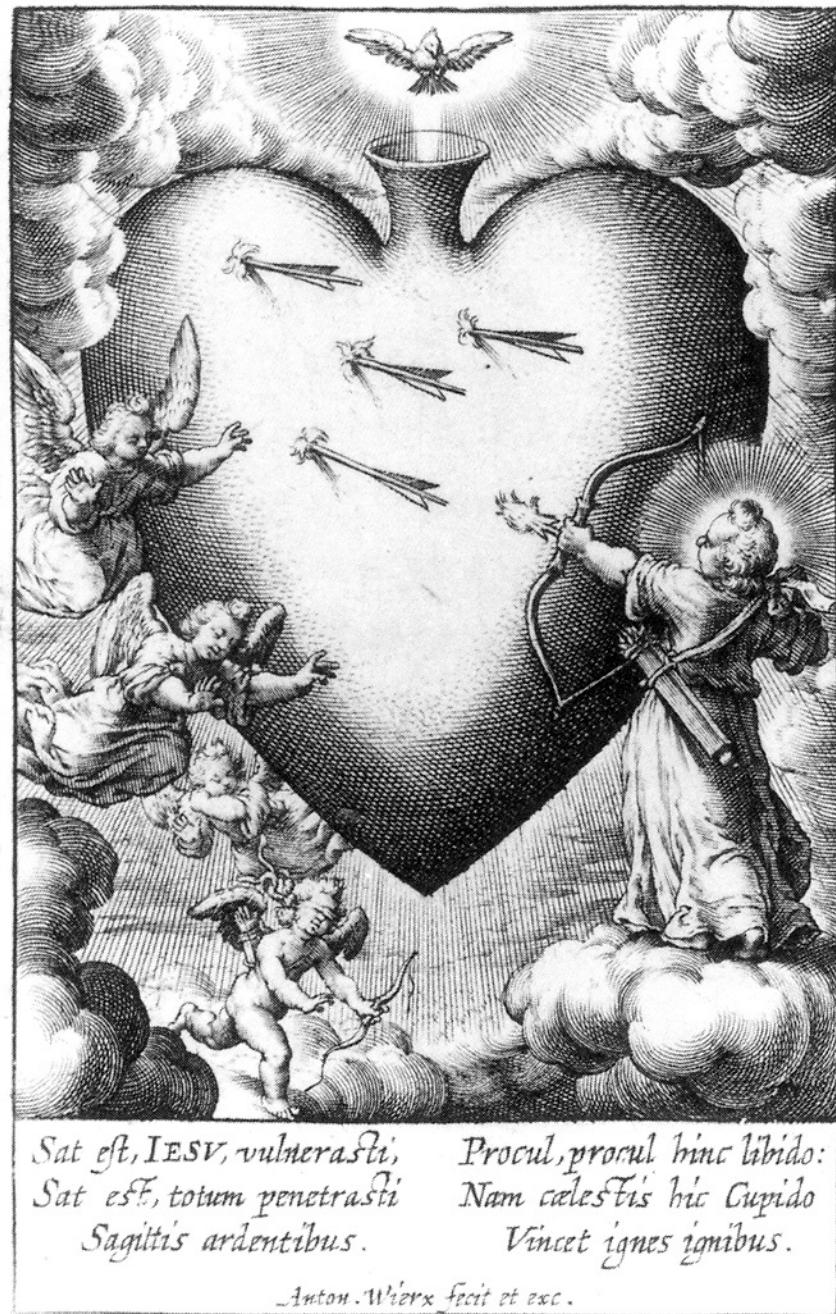


FIGURE 7.2 Anton Wierix the Younger, “Sat est, IESU, vulnerasti”, from *Cor Jesu amanti sacrum* (ca. 1586). Engraving, 92 × 57 cm. Brussels, Royal Library of Belgium (inv. no. A 1280).

IMAGE © ROYAL LIBRARY OF BELGIUM, BRUSSELS.

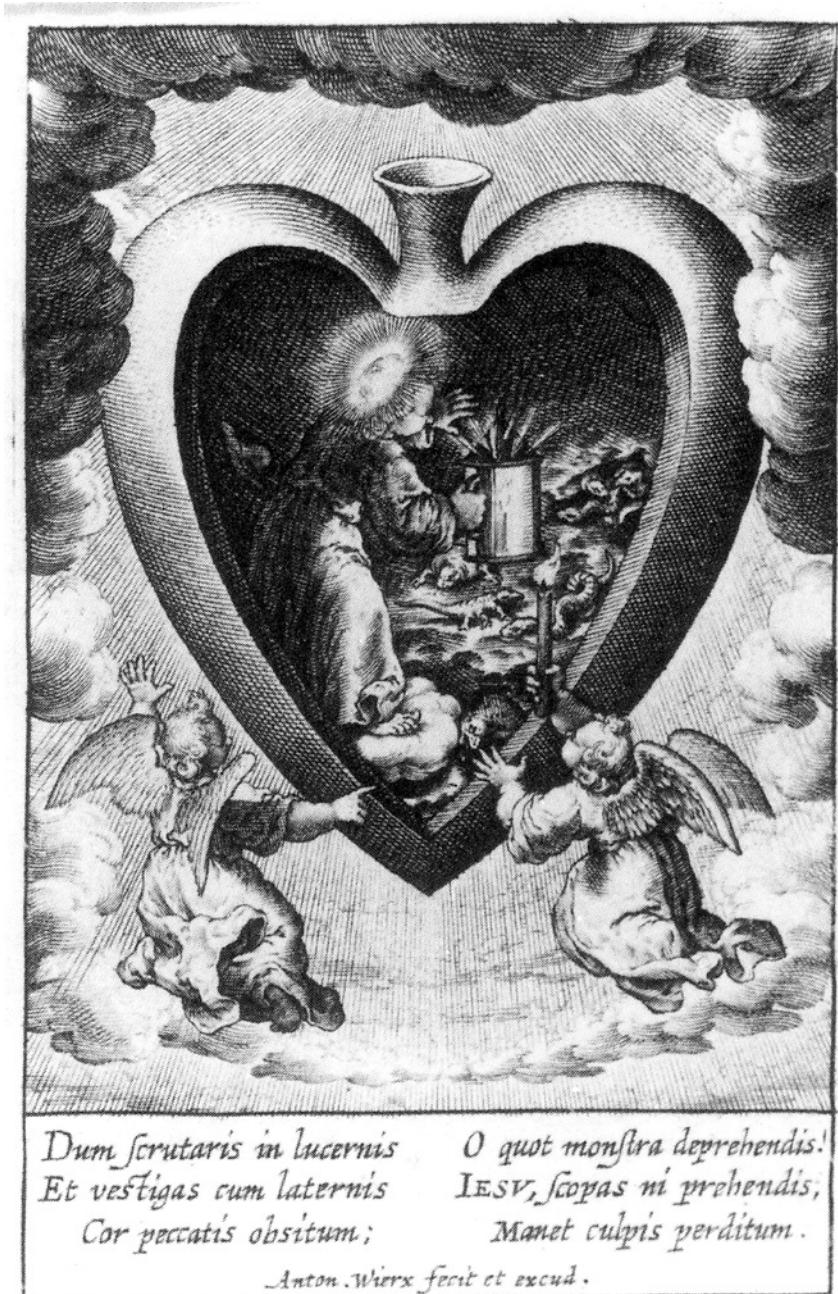


FIGURE 7.3 Anton Wierix the Younger, "Dum scrutaris in lucernis", from *Cor Jesu amanti sacram* (ca. 1586). Engraving, 93 x 58 cm. Brussels, Royal Library of Belgium (inv. no. A 1273).

IMAGE © ROYAL LIBRARY OF BELGIUM, BRUSSELS.



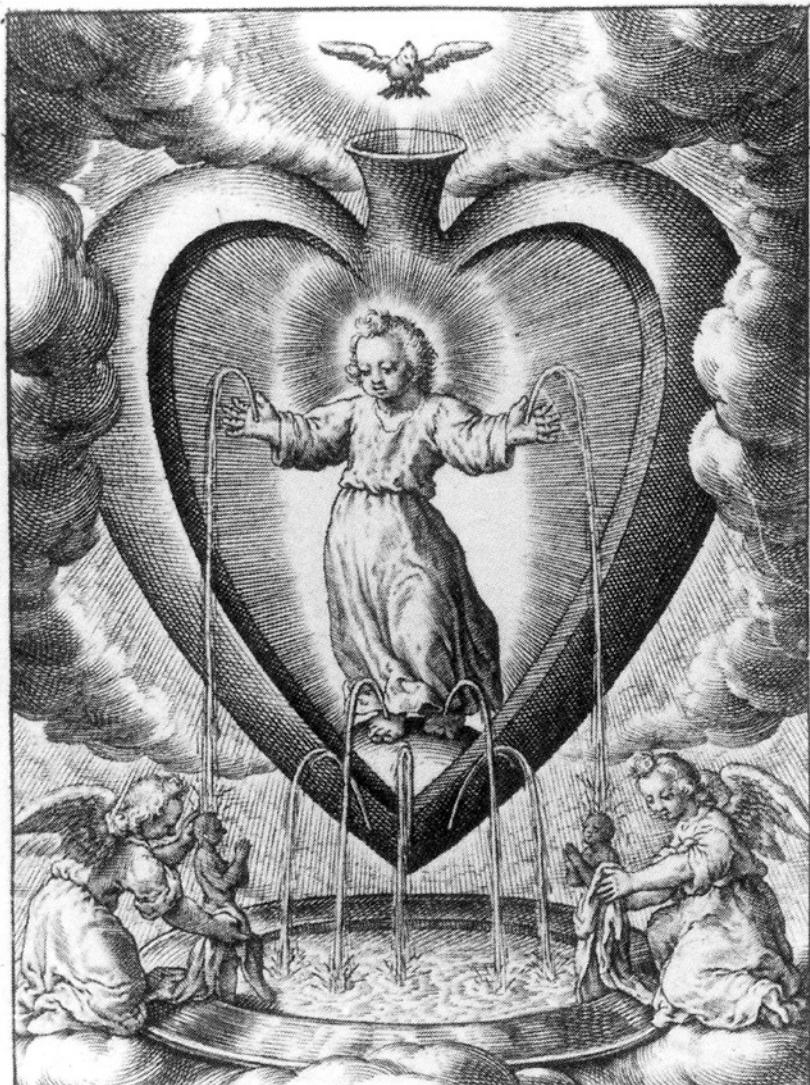
*En armatas flammis tendit  
IESVS manus, cor accendit  
Hinc et illinc facibus.*

*Age, totum comburatur,  
In fauillam redigatur  
Cor amoris ignibus.*

*Anton. Wierx fecit et excu.*

FIGURE 7.4 Anton Wierix the Younger, "En armatas flammis tendit", from *Cor Jesu amanti sacrum* (ca. 1586). Engraving, 93 x 57 cm. Brussels, Royal Library of Belgium (inv. no. A 1275).

IMAGE © ROYAL LIBRARY OF BELGIUM, BRUSSELS.



*Bone IESU, fontes fluant, Illis animam mundare  
 In cor nostrum toti ruant. A peccatis expiare  
 Gratiarum rituli. Ecce gaudent Angeli.*  
*Anton. Wierx fecit et excud.*

FIGURE 7.5 Anton Wierix the Younger, "Bone IESU, fontes fluant", from *Cor Jesu amanti sacram* (ca. 1586). Engraving, 98 x 57 cm. Brussels, Royal Library of Belgium (inv. no. A 1279).

IMAGE © ROYAL LIBRARY OF BELGIUM, BRUSSELS.



FIGURE 7.6 Anton Wierix the Younger, "Sunt auscultent qui Platoni", from *Cor Jesu amanti sacrum* (ca. 1586). Engraving, 92 × 56 cm. Brussels, Royal Library of Belgium (inv. no. A 1281).

IMAGE © ROYAL LIBRARY OF BELGIUM, BRUSSELS.



FIGURE 7.7 Anton Wierix the Younger, "Cor exulta, quid moraris?", from *Cor Jesu amanti sacrum* (ca. 1586). Engraving, 93 x 57 cm. Brussels, Royal Library of Belgium (inv. no. A 1282).

IMAGE © ROYAL LIBRARY OF BELGIUM, BRUSSELS.



FIGURE 7.8 Anton Wierix the Younger, "Pulsa chordas, sonet chelys", from *Cor Jesu amanti sacrum* (ca. 1586). Engraving, 93 x 58 cm. Brussels, Royal Library of Belgium (inv. no. A 1283).

IMAGE © ROYAL LIBRARY OF BELGIUM, BRUSSELS.

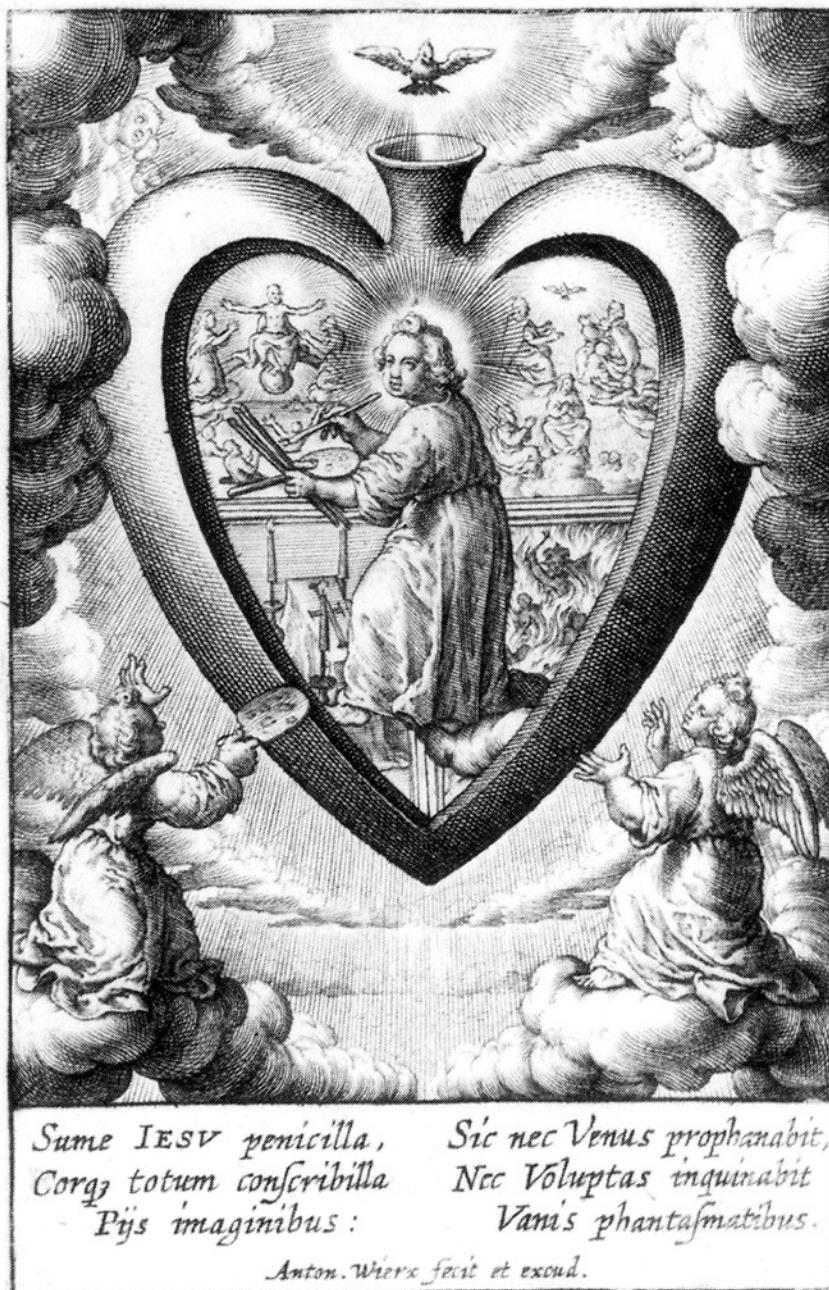


FIGURE 7.9 Anton Wierix the Younger, "Sume IESV penicilla", from *Cor Jesu amanti sacrum* (ca. 1586). Engraving, 93 x 58 cm. Brussels, Royal Library of Belgium (inv. no. A 1284).

IMAGE © ROYAL LIBRARY OF BELGIUM, BRUSSELS.



FIGURE 7.10 Anton Wierix the Younger, "Quis hic vultum non serenet?", from *Cor Jesu amanti sacrum* (ca. 1586). Engraving, 93 × 58 cm. Brussels, Royal Library of Belgium (inv. no. A 1285).

IMAGE © ROYAL LIBRARY OF BELGIUM, BRUSSELS.

The heart is used mainly in two different ways in the emblems: it is either manipulated by some characters, such as the Devil or the World, or inhabited by the Christ Child or Divine Love. In the first case, it has the function of a metonymy, and in the latter, a metaphor of the soul or one of its components. These constitute the two dominant orientations of heart-related emblematics. Most often, the inhabited heart becomes the place of contact with God; in this case the heart represents either the whole soul, or its closest part to God, its most spiritual part.

This almost anthropomorphic heart incorporates Augustinian anthropology. Emphasising the heart's mystical virtualities, the authors of the sixteenth century undertook to draw up a geography of it and above all to take from it a spiritual path. It was in this way that the question of its metaphorical import was posed. While St. Augustine was perfectly aware of the metaphorical value of the word, its use in a context of description of the interiority of the soul and in a meditative situation did not fail to give it a certain concrete value. The 'place' is thus the evocation of an intimate spiritual reality.<sup>22</sup> The topological metaphor of the soul is not only the convenient representation of an abstract reality but the constitution of a functional model thanks to which the meditant can move himself, can progress or regress in his search towards God, indeed can project his soul as if outside himself at the same time as remaining himself. At the least, we might say that the metaphor of the heart in this context has all the heuristic value that Paul Ricoeur grants it in its capacity for redescription of the referent.<sup>23</sup> To inscribe the soul in a space is to actualise its concept; to make the meditant move within this space is to transform the metaphor into narrative discourse, by introducing an enunciatory authority. The point of view of the conscience is thus the gaze of the reader-meditant who seeks the way of perfection in this spiritual universe. The particularity of heart-related emblematics on this question of the metaphorical point of view is to allow the materialisation, in a definite form, of the inner "spiritual place", which, by definition, is beyond any discourse. Indeed, let us recall the contrast that Sandaeus (Maximilian van der Sandt), for example, makes between speculative discourse and mystical experience, basing this contrast on

<sup>22</sup> For further developments on the topic, see Bergamo M., *L'Anatomie de l'âme: De saint François de Sales à Fénelon* (Grenoble: 1994); Cousinié F., *Images et méditation au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Rennes: 2007); Papasogli B., *Le "Fond du cœur": Figures de l'espace intérieur au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: 2000).

<sup>23</sup> See Ricoeur P., *La Métaphore vive* (Paris: 1975), esp. 273–321.

the essentially affective nature of the relationship between the soul and God.<sup>24</sup> The way of the heart is therefore the most direct and the most authentic way to go to God, for it is the way of Charity itself, but it is at the same time the way of the inexpressible.

### Adaptations and Transformations

It was not until 1626 that the Wierix series was taken over in a book form, accompanied by a text that provides a reading protocol and assigns a clear function to the engravings. The *Core sacrato a Giesu: Distinto in vinti figure* by Biagio Palma, a Barnabite priest, was then published in Rome.<sup>25</sup> This first adaptation attests to, once more, the wide circulation of Wierix's work across Europe. Another major adaptation consists in the edition of the *Cœur devot* in 1627 in Douai, by the Jesuit Fathers Etienne Luzvic and Etienne Binet,<sup>26</sup> as well as an edition translated the same year into Latin by Charles Musart.<sup>27</sup> The Luzvic and Binet adaptation truly constitutes the transformation of the whole series to a more formal meditative emblem book, as much as the one by Gabriel de Mello in his 1673 *Operations de Jesus, dans le cœur d'une ame fidelle*, published in Paris.<sup>28</sup> The Luzvic and Binet adaptation is structured according to the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises*. Within that structure, the image is then identified as *compositio loci*, followed by a point-by-point scrutiny and long prose development, concluded by a prayer. Many other early translations show the success of this meditation booklet. It was translated into Dutch as early as 1627

<sup>24</sup> See Sandaeus Maximilianus, *Pro Theologia Mystica Clavis* [...] (Cologne, Gualterian: 1640) "Preambula", 15–24.

<sup>25</sup> Praz, *Studies in Seventeenth-Century Imagery*, vol. 2, 443–444, mentions that the date to the colophon is 1632. I have been unable, unfortunately, to see that book.

<sup>26</sup> Luzvic Etienne – Binet Etienne, *Le Cœur devot: Throsne royal de Jesus Pacifique Salomon, par le R.P. Estienne Luzvic, auquel sont premises les sainctes faveurs du petit Jesus au cœur qu'il ayme et qui l'ayme, par le R.P. Estienne Binet de la mesme Compagnie* (Douai, Baltazar Bellere: 1627).

<sup>27</sup> Luzvic Etienne and Binet Etienne, *Cor Deo devotum Jesu pacifici Salomonis thronus regius, e Gallico P. Stephani Luzvic cui adjunctae ex P. Binet imaginum expositiunculae, latinitati dedit, et al calcemauxit P. Carolus Musart* (Antwerp, Henri Aertssen: 1627).

<sup>28</sup> Mello Gabriel de, *Les Divines operations de Jesus, dans le cœur d'une ame fidelle: Par G.D.M* (Antwerp [Paris], Jacques Van-Merle: 1673).

by the Jesuit Gerard Zoes,<sup>29</sup> into German in 1630 by Carl Stengel,<sup>30</sup> and into English in 1634, under the title *The Devout Hart or Royal Throne of the Pacifical Salomon*, by Henry Hawkins—already the author of the *Partheneia Sacra*—but without any illustrations.<sup>31</sup>

Thirteen plates of the original series were also used in Antwerp in 1659 by another Jesuit, Adriaan Poirters, in his *Heyligh Herte*.<sup>32</sup> Poirters is very much involved in the emblematic production of the Society of Jesus; he was one of the two adaptors of the Dutch version of the *Imago primi saeculi Societatis Jesu*,<sup>33</sup> which appeared in Antwerp in 1640, but he also published several other emblem books of his own. One can trace the little Antwerp hearts in Venice in 1671, published in Luigi Novarini—a Theatine—*Sigillo del Cuore*.<sup>34</sup> After the adaptation by the Recollect Bottens in 1685, the Pietist Gerrit Van Dulken used twelve plates of the series for his *Gereinigt Herte door't Geloof*.<sup>35</sup>

Anne Sauvy dedicated a long study to the series of *Images morales*, other converted Christian hearts, which she relates to the Antwerpian imagery, in particular as it has been spread by the Wierix's, with their peculiar style. From 1607 on, Father Michel Le Nobletz (1577–1652), fully developing the didactic character the *Cor Jesu* had when it was created, devised 'enigmatic paintings'

29 *Het Godtvuchtich Herte* [...] (Antwerp, Henri Aertssens: 1627). Another edition is from 1633; last, another Flemish adaptation, thanks to the Recollect Fulgence Bottens, appeared in 1685: *Het Goddelick Herte ofte De Woonste Godts in het Herte: Tot welcke den Heere Jesus de Ziele leert het selve te bereyden* (Bruges, Pieter van Pee: 1685).

30 *Das Gott zugeeignete Hertz Jesu des fridsamen Salomonis königlicher Thron* [...] (Augsburg: 1630). An abridged version was still published in 1827 in Augsbourg. The Benedictin Carl Stengel was the German translator of the successful mystical emblem books: he translated in 1628 the *Pia Desideria* by Herman Hugo, and in 1664 the *Schola Cordis* by Benedictus Van Haeften.

31 *The Devout Hart or Royal Throne of the Pacifical Salomon: Translated out of Latin. Enlarged with Incentives of St. Binet [...] and Now Enriched with Hymnes by a New Hand* (Rouen, Jean Cousturier: 1634).

32 *Het heyligh Herte ver-eert aen Godt-vrughtighe Herten voor eenen Nieviaer: Verciert met Beelden en Poesie. Door eenen Priester der Societeyt Jesu* (Antwerp, Cornelis Woons: 1659).

33 *Af-beeldinghe van d'eerste eeuwe Societeyt Jesu voor ooghen ghestelt door de Duyts-Nederlantsche Provincie der selver Societeyt, vertaald door Adriaan Poirters & Laurentius Uwens* (Antwerp, Balthazar Moretus: 1640).

34 *Sigillo del Cuore in cui con variii caratteri d'Amore s'insegna ad improntar nel cuore quello che lo puo render puro & atto per esser offerto al suo Giesù, e rappresentar al vivo quello, che morto rappresentano le morte figure, con l'aggiunta dell'arte Mirabile per santificar i Moti del Cuore* (Venice, Catania: 1671).

35 *Het gereinigt Herte door't Geloof: Aangetoond in verscheide Dichtkundige Uitbreidinge, en nader gedachten over sommige spreken der H. Schrift [...] Met kopere Plaaten versiert [...]* (Amsterdam, Marcelis van Heems: 1715).

or 'painted placards' for the missionary purposes of teaching, catechisation and memorisation. One of the surviving placards is that of the hearts, in which we can see that in large part they were directly inspired either by Wierix or by the adaptation published by Binet/Messager.<sup>36</sup> And, indeed, we find Wierix's hearts, or at least an iconography very strongly inspired by them, as late as the *Nouveau catéchisme en images* (*New Catechism in Pictures*), published in 1909.<sup>37</sup>

A number of mingled elements immediately stand out from the engraved series of the *Cor Jesu amanti sacrum* series. In effect, the two dominant paradigms of the series, affectivity and passivity, must be ordered around the two special devotions that appear here, the infant Jesus and the heart. Diminutives and interjections abound, placing in relief affectivity, which is already brought in to play by the richness of the theme of the infant. The contrast between the majesty of God, conveyed in principle by Christ, and the more human actions carried out by the figure of a child, such as knocking at the door, sweeping, sleeping, singing, reading, painting, etc., recall what underlies devotion to the infant Jesus, and what was soon to be formalised in France by Bérulle, namely the humility and the humanity of Christ. The devotion to the heart which is expressed here does not yet have the forms it was to take later in the seventeenth century and must be understood in the perspective of emblematic representation and in the Rheno-Flemish context, as the reading of the sestet shows. The pictorial part itself in fact assumes a quite remarkable importance in this series, which is certainly due to the exceptional quality of the engraving as well as to the repetition of a significant form as frame of the scenes. Hence one of

36 Sauvy, *Quatre siècles d'images savantes et populaires* 60–62.

37 *Nouveau catéchisme en images: Par un vicaire de Saint-Sulpice* (Paris, Lethielleux: n.d.) (imprimatur from 20 August 1908, and legal deposit from March 1909). 'Among some six hundred illustrations of religious pedagogy, which this book contains, one finds, at p. 305–312, fifteen little engravings, gathered under the general title of Christian Life, where one can see Jesus knocking at the door of the heart, visiting it, cleaning it, purifying it, etc.', Sauvy, *Le Miroir du cœur* 64 (my translation). Also Höltgen K.-J., "Emblem and Meditation: Some English Emblem Books and Their Jesuit Models", *Explorations in Renaissance Culture* 18, (1992) 55–91: 'About 1700, a Lutheran pastor in Helmstedt, Johann Rittmeyer, adapted ten of the pictures in several editions of his *Himmlishes Freuden-Mahl* (The Heavenly Feast). The reasons given in Rittmeyer's preface for the inclusion of the pictures echo those given by Hawkins in *The Devout Hart*: "In this edition, the intention was to improve the little book by pious figures in copperplate. In these, the special working of divine grace in the hearts is demonstrated to faithful and enlightened souls as though it took place before their own eyes. Thus they are led the more to prayer and the Love of God." [...] A simple early nineteenth century version of the Wierix series by the Catholic priest Johannes Gossner (1773–1858), *Das Herz des Menschen*, is still being published in German and English for the Protestant Pietist communities in Germany and in the USA' (at 81–82).

the questions is to determine *what* precisely is this heart, following on from the preceding thoughts on the wavering between the mystic place and the metaphor of the heart, and to discover what this representation makes it possible to express about the relationship between the soul and God.

The plates of the *Cor Jesu* recount the conversion of the Christian soul, and while the order of the plates has never been definitively fixed, it may be possible to distinguish the three phases of the ascent: purgation, illumination, and union.<sup>38</sup> However, the progression does not have the habitual rigour, and the possibility of modifying the order of the plates without damaging the coherence of the following ones demonstrates the suppleness of a rather undefined spiritual journey.

Once again this poses the unresolved question of the destination of these plates and of the spiritual milieu from which they emerged. The affective richness, in the context of Antwerp, allows us to glimpse a possible link with the Family of Love, but the advanced stage of the spiritual life they present may be addressed to the Beguines, who were steeped in Capuchin or Blosian spirituality. Furthermore, the probability of a more lay readership such as members of sodalities or catechumens speaks against a purely mystical reading of the series. The presence in the foreground of the frontispiece of a Capuchin and a Jesuit may allow us to refine our reading of the series. The first Capuchin friars arrived in Antwerp a few months after the reconquest of the city in 1585 by the Spanish power. We know that the two "new" orders—the Capuchins and the Jesuits—had excellent relations with each other and, in the former Low Countries at least, that both shared in the mystical fervour. The Capuchins have even been called 'the Jesuits of the poor'.<sup>39</sup> They were notably present in the field of evangelical activity and of missions. With the Jesuits, they formed the second force of the Counter Reformation, of which they also became one of the major symbols, but at that time under the sign of poverty. In the specific case of the *Cor Jesu amanti sacrum*, this double inspiration might in part explain this mixture of methodical meditation (which thus uses the arts and symbolism) and of passive contemplation (which omits pious works and presents an already highly advanced state on the path of perfection).

<sup>38</sup> 'The first engravings depict the purgative stage (temptations, pricks of conscience, inspirations, self-scrutiny, confession, grace imparted by the Sacraments, purification of the heart), others the progress of the illuminative stage, and finally, in a last group, the fruits of the unitive stage', in Praz, *Studies in Seventeenth-Century Imagery* 154.

<sup>39</sup> See Hildebrand P., *De kapucijnen in de Nederlanden en het Prinsbisdom Luik*, 10 vols. (Antwerp: 1945–1956). Indeed, in his study, *De spiritualiteit van de kapucijnen in de Nederlanden* (Utrecht: 1948), Father Optatus van Veghel compares them to the Jesuits. See also Porteman K., *De Mystieke Lyriek van Lucas Van Mechelen (1595/96–1652)* (Ghent: 1977).

### Capuchin Inspiration in the *Cor Jesu amanti sacrum*

The spiritual path of the *Cor Jesu* seems to begin at the level of the contemplative life, of which we may borrow the description of a number of stages from *The Rule of Perfection* (*La Règle de perfection*) of 1609 by the Capuchin friar Benoît de Canfield, by roughly following the initial order of the plates. This is not a matter of finding in Canfield a direct source of inspiration, even less a model or a term-by-term equivalence between each plate and each stage of the Canfieldian itinerary, but rather a general orientation of reading authorised by the presence of the Capuchin friar in the frontispiece, and attempting to understand the spirit in which the overall progression of the series takes place.<sup>40</sup>

The contemplative life, the second stage of the three stages of the journey, is a state of the soul that seeks the inner will of God, after finding his external will in the active life. This is done with a certain passivity:

The which choice consisteth in an aversion from the Creature, and in a simple conversion to the Creator; and is made by a true, faythfull, and simple regard of the will of God (that is) when in our worke, affection, or passion, wee cast our thought and spirituall sight on God, with all tranquilitie and repose, sweetly, serenely, and without all manner of stresse or violence; which thought or sight is free and in our powre, seated in the superiour part of our sowlle [...].<sup>41</sup>

40 The two first parts of the book have been published almost simultaneously in French and in English, in 1608 and 1609. The third (and most controversial) part has been published only in French in 1610. For a more comprehensive editorial history of the book, see Benoît de Canfield, *La Règle de perfection* 16–39. It is clearly most unlikely that *La Règle de perfection* was directly inspired by Wierix's engraved series, even if its composition was located between 1590 and 1600. The *Règle* circulated in manuscript fairly early on and in the absence of precise information on the date the plates were conceived, we may consider it therefore to be contemporary with the plates. But Benoît de Canfield was at that time in France and England, and it is impossible to establish any firm link. However, Benoît de Canfield was not the only 'master of masters themselves' (*ibidem*, introduction 15); he also encapsulated a tradition. One has only to read the critical apparatus of Jean Orcibal in his edition to see rise up from the Capuchin's text the entirety of Rhenan and Flemish mysticism, to which Wierix's *Cor Jesu* belongs in dazzling fashion.

41 Benoît de Canfield, *La Règle* 285 and 284. For quotations from the first and second part, we mention the English version only.

The soul discovers there 'the immensitie of God', of Whom it has 'experimental knowledge', 'not by particular discourse of the understanding' but 'by a generall and simple view and by her inheason to God'.<sup>42</sup> It is wounded there by the arrows of Charity, like in Wierix's plate 3 [Fig. 7.2], which the soul expresses in a lyrical first person:

I languish of the wowns which love hath made in my heart with the arrowe called (*Isa. 49*) *Sagitta electa* the choise arrowe, the which that divine Archer (whoe is Charitie) hath shot in my heart eftsoones upon his Manifestation unto mee, and whoe also like the good Archer hath followed his arrowe, so that both are fixed in my heart, and lodged in my bowels [...].<sup>43</sup>

Then the soul can move on to the degree of humiliation in which God Himself purifies the soul by washing 'the feete of my muddy and earthly affections'.<sup>44</sup> In the rest of the imagined dialogue between God and the soul, God says:

And therfore by this my lively, efficacious, sweet, and familiar operation in, and with thee, it pleaseth mee to wash and make cleane thy feete (to weet) the inferiour parte of thy sowlle, from all spot of passion and disordinate affection, and radically to plant my will in thee, wherby to make thee my lively temple [...].<sup>45</sup>

This passage may be related to plates 5 [Fig. 7.3] and 6 of the *Cor Jesu* series, and above all to the sestet of the latter: 'O beatam cordis aedem/ Te cui caelum dedit sedem/ Purgat suis manibus/ Animose puer verre,/ Monstra tuo vultu terre/ Tere tuis pedibus'.

'Exultation' and 'elevation' follow and conclude the contemplative life, at the end of which:

God, whoe hath totally seized upon all her powres, and so strooken and wouwnded her heart, and taken a full possession therof, that shee having now no more dominion over herself, followeth his inflaming instincts and attractions all in all, and (as it were) hand in hand, geveth eare to his

<sup>42</sup> Ibidem 293 and 292.

<sup>43</sup> Ibidem 299 and 296–298.

<sup>44</sup> Ibidem 300.

<sup>45</sup> Ibidem 303.

wordes, embraceth his doctrine, and (finally) geveth her self wholly over unto him, submitting and subjecting her to his good pleasure [...].<sup>46</sup>

One follows here on Wierix's plates the blaze of the heart (plate 8) [Fig. 7.4], the sovereignty of Jesus in the heart (plate 17) [Fig. 7.10], his predication (plate 13) [Fig. 7.6], and, perhaps also, the song and music in the heart (plates 14 and 15) [Figs. 7.7 and 7.8].<sup>47</sup>

In a third stage, then, the soul must unite itself to the essential will of God, 'purely spirit and life, totally abstract, purified (by itself) and stripped of all forms and images of created things'.<sup>48</sup> As I have already emphasised, this is an ordeal that is difficult to make explicit since it is located in a stage of unknowingness and of total abstraction of the soul. But how can one speak of 'disimagination', of the 'stripping bare of the spirit' over a series of engravings? Until this point, it has been possible to follow, in a global parallel, the progress of Canfield and that of the plates. The last stage is the most delicate, for it calls out for a change in point of view: it is no longer a question of seeking in the representation itself the motifs signifying this or that spiritual level, but of attending to the allegorical quality of the images and to the nature of the process of symbolisation.

Starting from this new perspective, then, let us return to the series on the basis of the comments made by the Jesuit Father Claude-François Ménestrier (1631–1705), the most important French theoretician of emblematics in the second half of the seventeenth century:

Les Emblemes du cœur sacré de Jesus-Christ, n'ont que deux parties, la peinture et les vers, pource qu'estant Allegoriques, ils s'expliquent facilement par les seules figures, et les vers, qui les accompagnent ne sont qu'un ornement de bienseance.

The Emblems of the sacred heart of Jesus Christ have only two parts, painting and verses, for as they are Allegorical they are easily explained by the figures alone, and the verses which accompany them are but an ornament of decorum.<sup>49</sup>

46 Ibidem 314.

47 In this case, it seems that the order of the plates chosen by Mauquoy-Hendrickx in her Wierix catalogue is more relevant as all these plates follow each other. It makes at least higher sense with regard to the description of such a spiritual course.

48 Benoît de Canfield, *La Règle* 333.

49 Ménestrier Claude-François, *L'Art des emblèmes* (Lyon, Benoist Coral: 1662) 56.

These lines are found in the chapter on the different parts that compose the emblem, the question being how to discover the extent to which one may do without the textual development. In his eyes, in fact, the 'painting and verses' are the main and necessary elements and, in certain cases, are sufficient:

Il faut pourtant remarquer qu'il n'y a que les Emblemes tirez des Proverbes, ou des sentences bien connues, ou des Apologues, ou les Allegoriques, qui puissent estre de simples figures, pource que la connaissance du Proverbe ou de la sentence qui leur sert de fondement supplée au defaut de l'explication.

It must, however, be noted that it is only Emblems drawn from Proverbs, or from well known maxims, or from Apologues, or from Allegories, which may be simple figures, for the knowledge of the Proverb or the maxim which serves as their basis supplements the deficiencies of the explanation [...].<sup>50</sup>

### Allegorical Hearts and Literal Images

The allegorical character of the images in *Cor Jesu* certainly allows one to do without a commentary, but the spirituality these images carry introduces in any case an ambivalence as to the allegorical distance with which they must be viewed. Passivity is their most striking feature: the Christian heart attains immortal glory with no mention of works or even of charity; in the end, the heart obtains both glory and laurels without martyrdom. Even the purgation of sins is entirely performed by God. Only compare, for example, plate 3 [Fig. 7.2], in which the heart is pierced by the arrows of Divine Love in such a way as to put to flight profane love, a little Cupid fleeing at the bottom of the engraving, with emblem 16 of the *Pia desideria* [Fig. 7.11], also a collection of emblems of mystical inspiration, in which the soul chooses Divine Love and turns away from profane love through its own movement: the conventional arrows of love and cherubs are present on both plates, but the *Cor Jesu* one evokes, for example, a state similar to that described at the transverboration of St. Theresa, wounded by love in the heart, therefore a gratuitous divine grace, while the other emphasises the deliberate choice of the soul. Behind each or almost each stage of the *Cor Jesu* we can certainly guess at concrete acts and gestures, such as the examination of conscience, confession, communion, prayer, preaching, etc. But nothing really invites us to do so; not even the texts of the sestets which, in

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50 Ibidem 50.



*Concupiuit anima mea desiderare iustificatio -  
nes tuas. Psal. 118.*

16.

FIGURE 7.11 Boetius a Bolswert, Emblem 16, "Concupiuit anima mea desiderare iustificationes tuas," in Hugo Herman, *Pia desideria* (Antwerp, Henri Aertssen: 1624). Engraving, 8°. Louvain-la-Neuve, University Library (AL 15946).

IMAGE © UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, LOUVAIN-LA-NEUVE.

most cases, are a literal enlargement of the engravings, in effect 'an ornament of decorum'. Literality dominates contemplation.

No mottos or maxims—at least in the original series—conceptualise the reading of the plates. The absence of symbolic development is like the expression of passivity: contemplation of the image *as it is*, is sufficient unto itself; it is contemplation quite literally. There is nothing to see beyond the image, and one understands all the better Ménestrier's assertion, not only because the engravings are quite evidently "allegorical", but also because they function in an almost self-referential way. The heart serves for a number of effects: it is the representation of the Christian's heart, at the first level, but it is also the empty signifying form, to "*image*" in Christ, in the love of Christ. It bears at one and the same time the signifying and signified, place and metaphor all together. Symbolic distance, its mediation, is thus abolished in the primacy of literality: the image says no more than what it represents, or at least attempts to abolish itself as *medium*, as opening on to the transcendent world. By way of comparison, we might look at the series of hearts that constitutes the last part of the *Sacrum Oratorium* (1634) by Pedro Bivero.<sup>51</sup> He also explores the place of the heart, by displaying a series of symbolic motifs [Fig. 7.12]. Their presentation recalls that of the *Cor Jesu*, the heart open on to the spiritual depths, but in which the "uncrossable" symbolic object imposes its mediation.

The heart, then, is not in itself image; it is, or it becomes, deiform. It is thus habitation, palace, but also temple and even altar. It is sanctified. It will not be a surprise to learn that one of the collections using the original sequence adds to it the representation of the Eucharistic sacrifice in the heart. The deiform heart finds its full expression in the last plate of Luzvic-Binet's collection and in the first plate of Mello's. We find there the Trinity in the heart, represented either by 'art',<sup>52</sup> or in the form of a reflection, the heart having become significantly 'the mirror of the Deity/And of the entire Trinity'.<sup>53</sup> In the first case, this is a Trinitarian image inscribed in the depths of the soul and towards which

51 Bivero Pedro, *Sacrum Oratorium piarum imaginum immaculatae Mariae* [...] (Antwerp, Balthazar Moretus: 1634).

52 'Quel art qui surprend ma raison/ Vous enferme en cette prison/ O trinité Sainte et Divine!' Mello, *Les Divines operations de Jesus* pl. 1.

53 Luzvic-Binet, 'Jesus in cordis speculo se, Sanctissimamque Trinitatem manifestat' (225). The use of Eckhartian vocabulary calls here for a brief remark. The text surely makes the distinction between God and the Deity, the latter being God considered in its absolute being, independently of his operations. However, a slightly modified conception seems to be used here, which can be found in the *Perle évangélique*, in a commentary of the Prologue of John: 'Au commencement était le Verbe. Ce commencement ici est la divine essence, ou la déité même, *contenant en soi la trinité des personnes, lesquelles personnes*



FIGURE 7.12 Theodoor Galle, *Imago Decima*, “Cor Agno et annulo signatum in cultum pignoris gloriae conferendae a Redemptore”, in Pedro Bivero, *Sacrum Oratorium* (Antwerp, Ex officina Plantiniana Balthasaris Moreti: 1634). Engraving, 4°. Louvain-la-Neuve, University Library (A 90321).

IMAGE © UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, LOUVAIN-LA-NEUVE.

the spiritual quest moves; in the second, we have the fulfilment of the attraction towards God—the heart is shown ‘at an angle’ and supported by angels, as if drawn by its tip like a magnet, but also like a cheval mirror inclining and changing orientation to perfect the reflection, which cannot but remind us of the ‘magnet’ heart evoked by Francis de Sales in his *Treatise on the Love of God*.<sup>54</sup>

This empty space that God must fill is thus an “acted” heart, and the plates gradually show the inhabitation of the Word in this specific spiritual location. While there is a purgation of sins, and we may possibly make out the three ways of the traditional ascent, everything takes place in a highly interior heart, one might say, that is to say a heart that maybe likened to the depths of the soul. Plate 11 makes explicit reference to this, with the instruments of the Passion placed ‘in imo corculo’. Similarly, the mention of the bed assimilates this heart to the depths of the soul,<sup>55</sup> in accordance with the spiritual interpretation of the *Song of Songs*; plates 4, 10, and 14 are all inspired by it. Jesus is hidden in these depths, because he places himself there, for example with the instruments of his Passion: any other way makes him inaccessible. This interiority is not without ambiguity since by welcoming God, through the flow of God into the soul, evoked by the mystical fountain of plate 12 [Fig. 7.5], the heart externalises itself to become in turn within God. The sestet of the plate of the worldly temptations, which enjoins the soul to aspire to the breast of Christ,<sup>56</sup> immediately introduces this double dimension, so characteristic of mystical discourse, in which spatiality is referenced in God. The passivity that characterises this series is in any case in itself the sign of this progressive exteriorisation of the soul: its “immobility” or its “indifference” must make possible deification.<sup>57</sup> With deification comes annihilation by love, which plate 8 deals

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*ne sont qu'un Dieu en une déité, et chaque personne en soi-même la déité'* (500–501, my italics).

54 François de Sales, *Traité* 629.

55 This is what Madame Guyon will explain at the end of the seventeenth century in her *Moyen court et très facile de faire oraison*, when she precisely comments on Ct 1:11–12: ‘La couche est le fonds [sic] de l’âme’, ed. Marie-Louise Gondal (Paris: 2001) 59.

56 ‘Christi sinus pete’.

57 Let us refer again to Mme Guyon’s *Moyen court*, who explains, with colourful detail, the function of passivity in order to achieve the ‘refiguration’ of the soul: ‘Le démon, par le péché, ayant gâté et défiguré cette belle image [de Dieu en l’âme], il a fallu que ce même Verbe, dont l’esprit nous avait été inspiré en nous créant, vînt la réparer. Il fallait que ce fût lui, parce qu’il est l’image de son Père et que l’image ne se répare pas en agissant, mais en souffrant l’action de celui qui la veut réparer. Notre action doit donc être de nous mettre en état de souffrir l’action de Dieu et que le Verbe retrace en nous son image. *Une image qui se remuerait empêcherait le peintre de contredire un tableau sur elle. Tous les*

with: while Mello's translation speaks of dissolution, the Latin text exploits the metaphor of the fire of Love that reduces the heart to ashes: 'In favillam redigatur/ Cor amoris ignibus'.<sup>58</sup> It is thus a transfigured and a full heart, surrounded by God and the heavens, which closes on itself and closes the series.

The heart has several functions at the same time: it is the representation of the Christian heart, on a first level, but it is also the signifying and empty shape (*figura*) to be "imaged" in Christ, to be conformed to the image of God. It is at the same time the signified and the signifying, locus and metaphor all together. The symbolic mediation, its materiality, is then abolished in favour of a literal contemplation.

The coexistence of allegorical and literal qualities *at the same time* in these images is first, the expression of their mystical meaning and second, the representation of the solitary place of the soul. It is not anymore a place for memory or meditation, nor just a mental oratory, but the place where the ultimate transformation of the soul takes place, from a spiritual hermitage for itself into the temple of God. Finally, the representation of such an object gives us also the opportunity to explore the paradoxical ontology of the image: representing the void of spiritual solitude is like representing the absence itself that an image at the same time seeks to suppress and conjure up.

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 Camus Jean-Pierre, *La Solitude intérieure* (Paris, G. Alliot: 1640).

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*mouvements que nous faisons par notre propre esprit empêchent cet admirable peintre de travailler et font faire de faux traits.* Il faut donc demeurer en paix, et ne nous mouvoir que lorsqu'il nous meut' (65, my italics).

<sup>58</sup> Benoît de Canfield explains that the fire of Love allows for the purgation of images, first step of the 'dénudation d'esprit', which is by the way a divine operation, man being unable to do without images in his operations. This purgation by the fire of Love leads the soul to sink into God, reversing the spatial relationship that I have just mentioned: '[...] la purgation se fait par le feu d'amour [...]. Si ardent est ce feu d'amour, qu'il consume en elle toute impureté, et *finalement si étroite est cette union qu'elle est toute abîmée en Dieu, où toutes ses imperfections sont noyées, consumées et anéanties [...]*' (366–367, my italics).

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## *Emblemata solitariae Passionis: Jan David, S.J., on the Solitary Passion of Christ*

Walter S. Melion

This essay examines the nature and meaning of the *solitaria Passio*, as set forth in Jan David, S.J.'s *Messis myrrhae et aromatum ex instrumentis ac mysterijs Passionis Christi* (*Harvest of Myrrh and Spices [Gathered] from the Instruments and Mysteries of Christ's Passion*) (Antwerp, Balthasar and Jan Moretus: 1607), one of the Jesuit order's earliest emblem books [Fig. 8.1]. David (1546–1613) was a renowned preacher and apologist, mainly active in the Provincia Belgica, where he also served as rector of the Jesuit College in Ghent (1594–1602).<sup>1</sup> Between 1601 and 1610, he composed a series of four scriptural emblem books, exegetical in argument, innovative and mutually distinctive in format, and hugely influential: *Veridicus Christianus* (*True Christian*, ed. princeps 1601), *Occasio arrepta, neglecta* (*Occasion Seized, Shirked*, ed. princeps 1605), *Paradisus sponsi et sponsae, et Pancarpium Marianum* (*Paradise of the Bridegroom and Bride, and Marian Garland*, ed. princeps 1607), and *Duodecim specula* (*Twelve Mirrors*, ed. princeps 1610) [Figs. 8.2–8.4].<sup>2</sup> The Plantin firm in

1 On David's *vita*, see Geerts-Van Roey L. – Andriessen J., S.J., "Pater Joannes David S.J. (1546–1613)", *Ons geestelijk erf* 30 (1956) 113–155; Andriessen J., "Leven en werk van Joannes David s.j. 1546–1613", *West-Vlaanderen: Tweemaandelijks tijdschrift voor kunst en cultuur* 12 (1963) 220–224; and Müelenare J. de, "De Jezuïeten in en uit Kortrijk, 1583–1993: I. Het begon met Joannes David, 1546–1613", *Avond* (Brugge) 23, 6 [Nov.–Dec.] (1993) 35–46.

2 On David's four emblem books, see Backer A. de – Backer A. de, S.J. – Sommervogel C., S.J., *Bibliothèque de la compagnie de Jésus*, 9 vols. (Brussels: 1890–1900; Paris: 1890–1932), vol. 2, cols. 1844–1853; Daly P.M. – Richard Dimler G., S.J., *The Jesuit Series, Part One (A–D)* (Montreal et al.: 1991) 147–162; and Imhof D., *Jan Moretus and the Continuation of the Plantin Press*, Bibliotheca Bibliographica Neerlandica, Series Major III, 2 vols. (Leiden: 2014), vol. 1, 221–223 (*Duodecim specula*), 224–227 (*Occasio*), 227–229 (*Paradisus et Pancarpium*), 229–234 (*Veridicus Christianus*). On David's innovative emblem books, see Lieb L., "Emblematische Experimente: Formen und Funktionen der frühen Jesuiten-Emblematik am Beispiel der Emblembücher Jan Davids", in Manning J. – Vaeck M. van, *The Jesuits and the Emblem Tradition: Selected Papers of the Leuven International Emblem Conference, 18–23 August, 1996* (Turnhout: 1999) 307–321. On David's place within the Dutch literary canon, see Porteman K. – Smits-Veldt M.B., *Een nieuwe vaderland van de muzen: Geschiedenis van de*

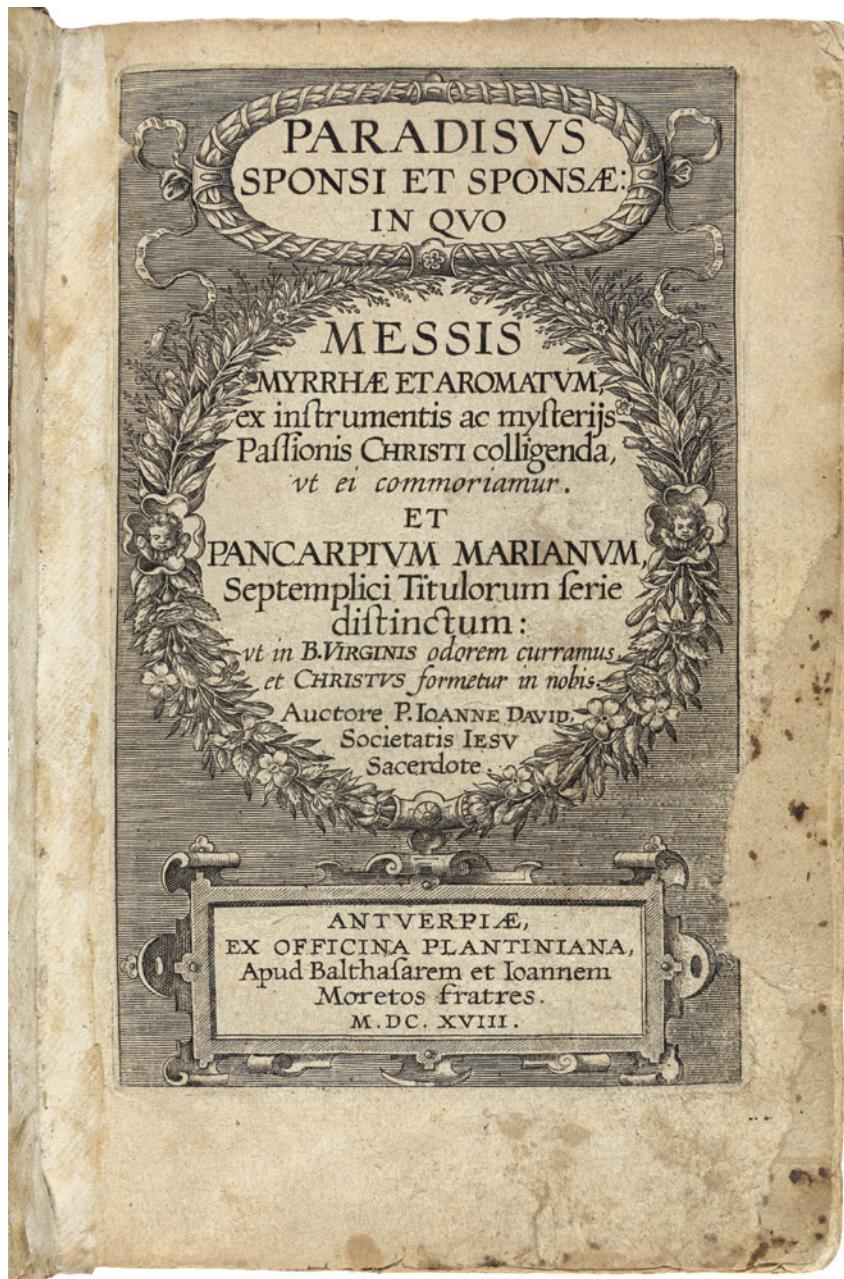


FIGURE 8.1 *Theodoor Galle (?), Title page to Jan David, Paradisus sponsi et sponsae (Antwerp, Ex officina Plantiniana, apud Ioannem Moretum: 1607; reprint ed., Antwerp, Ex officina Plantiniana, apud Balthasarem et Ioannem Moretos fratres: 1618). Engraving, 8°. Chicago, IL, The Newberry Library (Case W1025.22).*  
IMAGE © THE NEWBERRY LIBRARY, CHICAGO, IL.



FIGURE 8.2 *Theodoor Galle and workshop of Philips Galle, Title page to Jan David, Veridicus Christianus (Antwerp, Ex officina Plantiniana, apud Ioannem Moretum: 1601). Engraving, 4°. Chicago, IL, The Newberry Library (Case W 1025.223).*  
IMAGE © THE NEWBERRY LIBRARY, CHICAGO, IL.

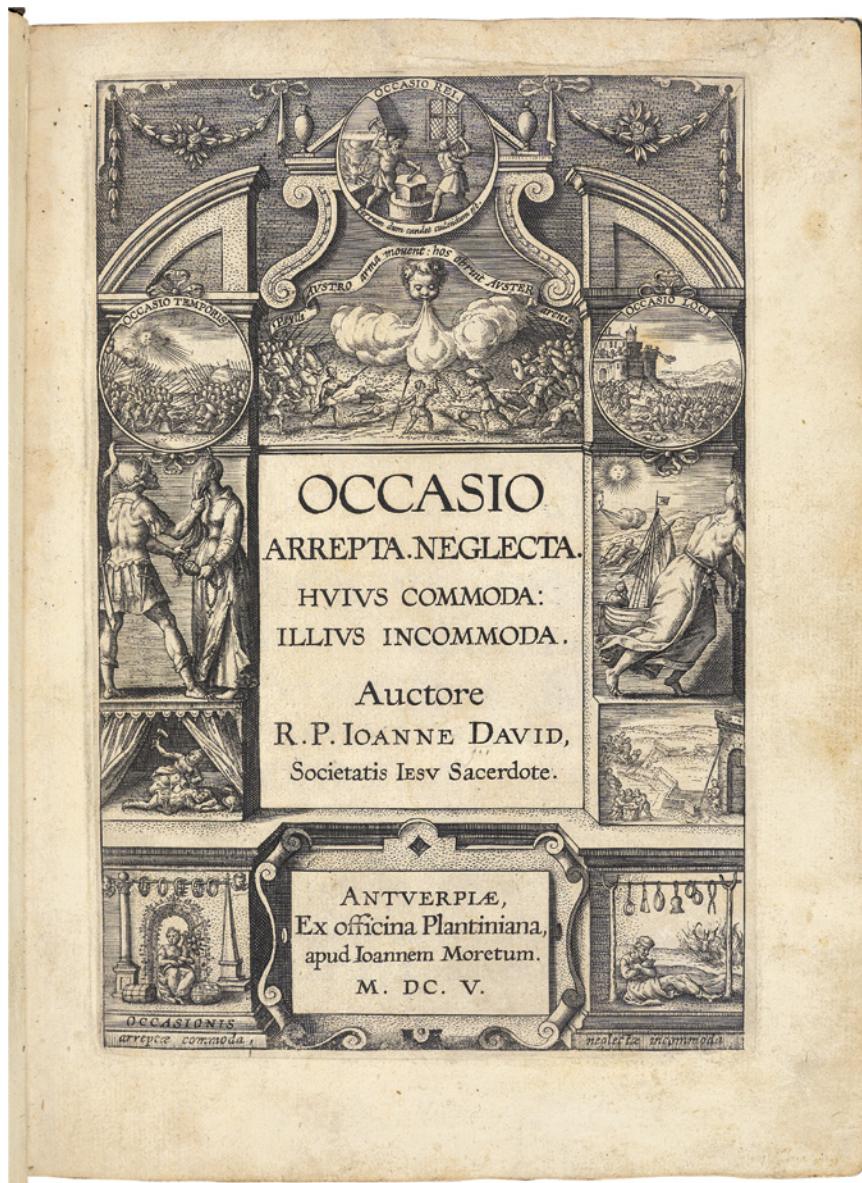


FIGURE 8.3 *Theodoor Galle and workshop of Philips Galle, Title page to Jan David, Occasio arrepta, neglecta. Huis commoda, illius incommoda (Antwerp, Ex officina Plantiniana, apud Ioannem Moretum: 1605). Engraving, 8°. Chicago, IL, The Newberry Library (Case Y682.D28).*

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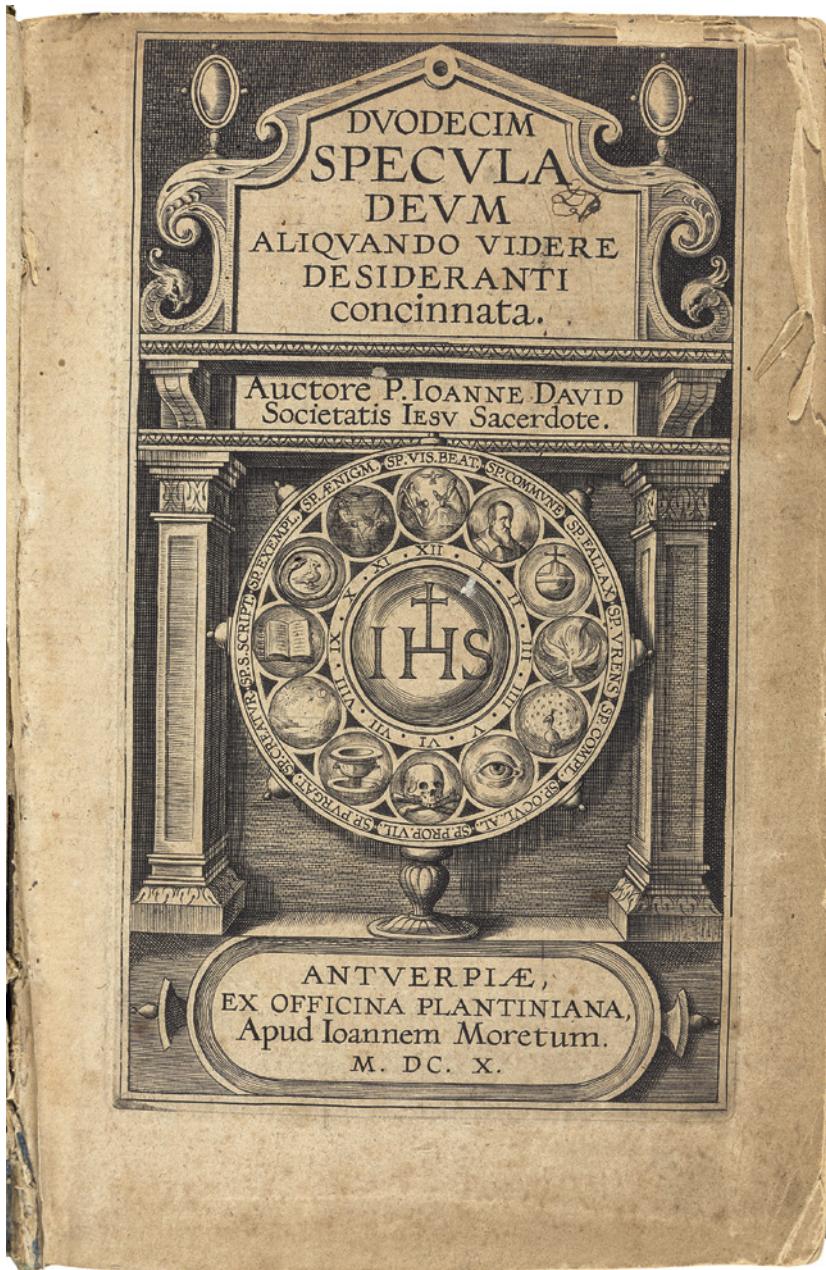


FIGURE 8.4 *Theodoor Galle and workshop of Philips Galle, Title page to Jan David, Duodecim specula Deum aliquando videre desideranti concinnata (Antwerp, Ex officina Plantiniana, apud Ioannem Moretum: 1610). Engraving, 8°. Chicago, IL, The Newberry Library (Case W 1025.216).*

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Antwerp, under the direction of Jan Moretus, published all four books, and the Galle workshop, specifically Theodoor Galle, supplied the elaborate copper-plate engravings, one per chapter, on which David's texts are based.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, David's mottos, epigrams, and commentaries cleave closely to these *picturae*: the constituent scenes are marked with roman capitals, inscribed in alphabetical order, that correspond to specific passages of the commentary, marginally annotated with the same roman capitals. Given that the books' words and images are so tightly woven, it seems more than likely that David supervised, or at least collaborated in the production of the pictorial *inventiones*.

The *Messis* forms part of David's third emblem book, the *Paradisus*; in fact, it functions as the opening half of this bipartite emblematic treatise, which, typically for David, is made up of sequential, interlocking spiritual exercises.<sup>4</sup> The *Messis* consists of exercises focusing on the Passion of Christ, visualised as a garden planted with episodes from and instruments of the Passion [Fig. 8.5]. *Anima* (Soul) enters this verdant enclosure where she savours the fifty floral specimens comprised by the fifty chapters of the *Messis*. There then follow the fifty complementary chapters of the *Pancarpium*, wherein *Anima*, modelling her behaviour on that of the Virgin, plucks and plaits these specimens into

*Nederlandse literatuur, 1560–1700* (Amsterdam: 2009) 134, 294–296, 484. On David's image theory as it relates to that of other Jesuits, see Dekoninck R., *Ad imaginem: Status, fonctions et usages de l'image dans la littérature spirituelle jésuite du XVIIe siècle* (Geneva: 2005) 194–196, 286–297, 312–324, 339–349.

- 3 On the joint involvement of the publisher Jan Moretus and printmaker Philips Galle in the production of David's emblem books, see Sellink M., "Joannes David, *Veridicus christianus*", in Imhof D. (ed.), *The Illustration of Books Published by the Moretuses*, exh. cat., Plantin-Moretus Museum, Antwerp (Antwerp: 1996) 88–89; Bowen K., "Declining Wages for the Printing of Book Illustrations: Arrangements between the Galle Family of Printmakers and the Managers of the Officina Plantiniana in Seventeenth-Century Antwerp", in Blondé B. (ed.), *Doodgewoon: Mensen en hun dagelijks leven in de geschiedenis. Liber amicorum Alfons K.L. Thijs*, Bijdragen tot de geschiedenis 87:1–2 (Antwerp: 2004) 63–85; and eadem, "Philips Galle, His Descendants, and Print Workshops in Seventeenth-Century Antwerp", *Print Quarterly* 26 (2009) 123–142.
- 4 On the *Paradisus* and its corollary embedded emblem book, the *Pancarpium Marianum*, see Delfosse A., *La "Protectrice du Païs-Bas": Stratégies politiques et figures de la Vierge dans les Pays-Bas espagnols* (Turnhout: 2009) 215–216; Melion W.S., "Meditative Images and the Potrayal of Image-Based Meditation", in Melion W.S. – Dekoninck R. – Guiderdoni-Bruslé A. (eds.), *Ut pictura meditatio: The Meditative Image in Northern Art, 1500–1700* (Turnhout: 2012) 7–60, esp. 32–60; and idem, *The Meditative Art: Studies in the Northern Devotional Print, 1550–1625*, Early Modern Catholicism and the Visual Arts 1 (Philadelphia, PA: 2012) 334, 336–339. On the integration of the *intellektuale* and *voluntative Funktionen* in the Marian emblems of the *Pancarpium*, see Lieb, "Emblematische Experimente" 310–312.



FIGURE 8.5 *Theodoor Galle and workshop of Philips Galle, Frontispiece, "Reciprocal Invitation of the Bride and Bridegroom to their Respective Gardens", in Jan David, Paradisus sponsi et sponsae [...] (Antwerp, Ex officina Plantiniana, apud Ioannem Moretum: 1607; reprint ed., Antwerp, Ex officina Plantiniana, apud Balthasarem et Ioannem Moretos fratres: 1618). Engraving, 8°. Chicago, IL, The Newberry Library (Case W1025.22).*

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a Marian garland: all the while, *Anima* visualises how Mary—compassionately but also systematically—has imitated every virtue bodied forth by her son during his life, and most particularly in the Passion [Figs. 8.6 and 8.7]. As she exercised herself in the virtues of Christ, so must we follow her example by ornamenting ourselves spiritually with these same efflorescent virtues. The representational status of the Marian series is thus doubled, for one views its images through the lens of the prior images of *passiones Christi* gathered in the *Messis*. The mimetic structure of the *Paradisus* thereby underscores the thematic of Marian mimesis that permeates the *Pancarpium*.

The book is a study in the process of internalisation: the journey through the garden of the Passion requires the votary to plumb the depths of Christ's solitary suffering, in hopes, paradoxically, of becoming one with the Saviour. Conversely, Mary's garden is planted with specimens of her unanimity with Jesus. The fifty places that mark passage through the one garden, then the other, are richly ornamented by another kind of place—*loci communes*—the scriptural places which David expounds in order better to explore the mind, heart, and spirit of Christ, and then of the Virgin. What David offered his reader was a series of exercises that were as much spiritual as exegetical, deeply contemplative and yet anchored to orthodox readings of Scripture. Both kinds of exercise were devised above all for David's primary dedicatees, the Archdukes Albert and Isabella, and secondarily for students at the Jesuit Colleges and, in particular, Jesuit scholastics. For both constituencies, the book offered an introduction to the practice of mystical devotion, made suitable for lay readers: based in Catholic exegetical tradition and in the sacramental imagery of baptism, penance, and the Eucharist, the *Paradisus* describes the soul's stepwise communion with Christ in the Passion, even while reconciling the aspiration toward unitive devotion with a commitment to ministry, modelled on the sacrificial vocation of Christ, and with devotion to the institutional Church and its liturgical practices.

### “The Agony of Christ in the Garden”

The *Messis* begins with an extended subset of seven penitential emblems dwelling on the intense experience of solitude endured, but also cultivated, by Christ at two key moments of the Passion—the Agony in the Garden and the Carrying of the Cross. Emblems 2, 3, and 4—“Horror in horto” (“Trembling in the Garden”), “Angelica confortatio” (“Angelic Consolation”), and “Sudor sanguineus” (“Bloody Sweat”)—reveal how Christ initiates the Passion by entering into an increasingly solitary state of proleptic meditation on his impending



FIGURE 8.6 Theodoor Galle and workshop of Philips Galle, Emblem 47, "Deposition from the Cross", in Jan David, *Paradisus sponsi et sponsae* [...] (Antwerp, Ex officina Plantiniana, apud Ioannem Moretum: 1607; reprint ed., Antwerp, Ex officina Plantiniana, apud Balthasarem et Ioannem Moretos fratres: 1618). Engraving, 8°. Chicago, IL, The Newberry Library (Case W 1025.22).

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FIGURE 8.7 Theodoor Galle and workshop of Philips Galle, Emblem 6, "Mother of Holy Hope", in *Jan David, Paradisus sponsi et sponsae [...]* (Antwerp, Ex officina Plantiniana, apud Ioannem Moretum: 1607; reprint ed., Antwerp, Ex officina Plantiniana, apud Balthasarem et Ioannem Moretos fratres: 1618). Engraving, 8°. Chicago, IL, The Newberry Library (Case W1025.22).

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sacrifice, the burden of which gradually weighs him down as if he were already carrying the cross [Figs. 8.8–8.10]. David claims that the experience of solitude is both intensely painful and immensely generative, causing Christ in his loneliness to bleed drops of blood that fertilise the garden and bring its seeds to fruition. The solitary suffering of Christ is seen as an extension of the mystery of the Incarnation, whereby God unites with humankind, and paradoxically, as the affective instrument that binds him to us, and us to him. Within this frame of reference, solitude conduces to communal familiarity, intimately conjoining the votary and Christ. Meditative solitude is also construed as a mimetic medium of transmission that allows the votary to transplant into his heart the potent image of Christ's solitary suffering. Emblems 28, 29, and 30—“Baiulatio crucis” (“Carrying of the Cross”), “Simon Cyrenaeus” (“Simon of Cyrene”), and “Planctus mulierum” (“Lamentation of the Women [of Jerusalem]”)—provide a chiastic complement to Emblems 2, 3, and 4 [Figs. 8.8–8.10, 8.11–8.13]: Christ is first shown carrying the cross in complete isolation and then, by stages, joining with compassionate co-sufferers whose presence converts penitential isolation into collective consolation. The sequence reaches its climax in Emblem 31—“Veronica, seu Berenice” (“Veronica, or rather, Berenice”)—in which the imprint of the Holy Face on the sudarium exemplifies how thoroughly, through the process of meditative prayer, one comes to be united with Christ in mind, word, and deed, ceasing to be alone [Fig. 8.14].

The first emblem in the sequence of seven, “Horror in horto”, centres on an image of Christ departing from the apostles to pray in solitude (A) [Fig. 8.8]. He has taken with him only three disciples—Peter, James, and John—having left the others behind, when he entered the Garden of Gethsemane. Now he withdraws from these three as well, as his words, excerpted from *Matthew* 26:38, and inscribed on the banderole, reveal: ‘My soul is sorrowful even unto death: [stay you here, and watch with me].<sup>5</sup> This text derives from *Matthew* 26:36–39, which describes the intense apprehension ('horror') felt by Christ at the impending Passion. The horror of what he foresees impels him gradually to distance himself from his followers, so that he may privately entreat God to lift this isolating, burdensome ‘chalice’: ‘Sit you here, till I go yonder and pray. And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to grow sorrowful and to be sad. [...] And going a little further, he fell upon his face, praying, and saying: My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me.’ The Latin epigram contrasts the effects of human sin upon Christ, as seen in the image, and upon sinful humankind; if their heavy weight elicited sighs and groans, and led him to remove himself from the disciples, what direr consequences

<sup>5</sup> ‘Tristis est anima mea usque ad mortem. Mat. 26’.



FIGURE 8.8 Theodoor Galle and workshop of Philips Galle, Emblem 2, "Trembling in the Garden", in *Jan David, Paradisus sponsi et sponsae [...] (Antwerp, Ex officina Plantiniana, apud Ioannem Moretum: 1607; reprint ed., Antwerp, Ex officina Plantiniana, apud Balthasarem et Ioannem Moretos fratres: 1618)*. Engraving, 8°. Chicago, IL, The Newberry Library (Case W1025.22). IMAGE © THE NEWBERRY LIBRARY, CHICAGO, IL.

will not ensue for the perpetrators of such sins: 'Since you groan, Christ, heavy-laden with my sins; will they not weigh more heavily upon their author?'<sup>6</sup> The implication is that sin, in bearing down upon the sinner, threatens to isolate him from God and his fellow men, oppressing him even more intolerably than it did Christ.

The subsidiary scenes in *imago 2* depict affective analogies, taken from the Old and New Testaments, for the fear of death that shook Christ at Gethsemane. Affinities of pose, gesture, and/or facial expression advertise the relationship between episode A and the corollary episodes B, E, and F: for example, the figure of Christ in A is a mirror image of that in B, and like Christ, Susanna in E and Abraham in F elevate their arms and eyes. David emphasises in the commentary that Jesus's fear was compounded with his horror of sin, for he knew full well that he alone must die to absolve sin's deadly effect upon the human soul. B illustrates *Luke 11:33*: Christ mourns the death of Lazarus who adumbrates the sinner slain and buried by sin. Foreshadowed here, his later experience of horror and fear are construed as mysteries, comprised by the greater mystery of the Incarnation:

Nec est sicut filius hominis, ut mutetur; verum tamen vere filius hominis,  
ut dolores et horrores nostros in se suscipiat.

[...]

Edissere nobis, Domine, tam admirandi tui timoris horrorisque mysterium. Forte id nos in simili docuisti. Quando namque Lazarum susciturus a mortuis nobis eo facto veram peccatoris conversionem adumbrare voluisti, per quam in peccatis mortuus, sepultus foetensque ad vitam animae revocaretur, infremuisti spiritu et turbasti temetipsum et lacrymatus es, et fremens in temetipso venisti ad monumentum. Itaque, ceu Iesus et salvator noster, salvare nos volens morte tua, etiam ante mortem docere nos visus es, quo pacto peccatum (propter quod eras moriturus) evitemus, ut nimirum horror ille tuus peccati nobis horrorem incuteret et nos ab eius perpetratione arceret.

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6 David Jan, S.J., *Messis myrrhae et aromatum, ex instrumentis ac mysteriis Passionis Christi colligenda, ut ei commoriamus*, in idem, *Paradisus sponsi et sponsae, in quo messis [...] et Pancarpium Marianum, septemplici titularum serie distinctum, ut in Beatae Virginis odoram curramus et Christus formetur in nobis* (Antwerp, Balthasar and Joannes Moretus: 1607), *imago 2*: 'Si tu, Christe, gemis scelerum sub mole meorum,/ Quo scelerum authorem pondera tanta prement?'.

Nor is he the likeness of a son of man, who would be changeable, but he is truly a son of man, since he receives in himself our sorrow, our fear and trembling.

[...]

Explain to us, Lord, the mystery of your most admirable fear and horror. Perchance you have taught it already via an analogy. For when you were about to raise Lazarus from the dead, and wished by that deed to adumbrate the conversion of the sinner [...], you groaned in spirit, disquieted yourself, and wept; and murmuring plaintively, you came to the sepulchre. And so, Jesus, our Saviour, wishing by your death to save us, you seemed to teach even before your death, how we ought to shun sin (on account of which you were going to die), doubtless, in order that your horror might instil in us the horror of sin and deter us from the commission of sin.<sup>7</sup>

E portrays Susanna, on her own in the garden, bereft of attendants, accosted by the two elders, as recounted in *Daniel* 13:22–23. Even in these straitened circumstances, her horror of sin far exceeds her fear of death, and in this respect above all, she serves as a type of Christ in the garden.<sup>8</sup> David compares her to Eleazar, in 2 *Maccabees* 6:18–31, who for singly choosing to remain kosher, was martyred by the tyrant Antiochus. F represents *Genesis* 15:11–12: Abraham, alone before the altar of the Lord, is seized by a ‘great and darksome horror’ that prepares him to receive the covenantal gift of promise.<sup>9</sup> The two furthermost scenes accentuate the horror felt by Christ in his agony: he trembled as greatly as sinners shall tremble on the day of judgement (C), and was troubled as exceedingly as Baltassar, king of Babylon, when the Lord’s hand wrote upon the wall (D).<sup>10</sup>

David layers other scriptural passages onto the Agony in the Garden, dilating upon the imagery of the Lord’s painful solitude. He applies to Christ the words Jesus himself used to describe John the Baptist in *Matthew* 11:7: as John is like a lone reed in the desert, unshaken by the wind, so Christ is solitary and forlorn, yet steadfast. Moreover, Jesus wholly differs from the lone leaf or dry straw, in *Job* 13:25, that like a faithless man is carried away with the wind, when God shows his power and pursues him:

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7 Ibidem 6–7.

8 Ibidem 8.

9 Ibidem 8–9.

10 Ibidem 7–8.

Quare tristis es, anima mea, et quare conturbas me? Quid existi in horum dilecti tui videre? Arundinem vento agitamat? Sed quid existi vide- re? Deum contra folium, quod vento rapitur, ostendentem potentiam suam et stipulam siccum persequentem?

Wherefore are you sad, my soul, and wherefore do you disquiet me? What did you go to see in the garden of your beloved? A reed shaken by the wind? What, then, did you go to see? God showing forth his power against a windswept leaf, and overmastering a dry stalk?<sup>11</sup>

Just as these dissimiles take the form of objects seen from a certain distance, so Christ is objectified in *imago 2* and the commentary: we see him from an external vantage point; he is as far, if not farther, from us than from Peter, James, and John [Fig. 8.8]. This device further emphasises the solitariness of Christ, whose isolation stems from his singular realisation that in crossing the garden threshold ('ipso statim limine'), he has moved one step closer toward his self-sacrifice, in effect embarking upon the Passion.<sup>12</sup> He holds before his eyes the image of the world's collective sins, and more particularly, he discerns the hidden analogy between the Garden of Gethsemane and the garden of paradise, where original sin, and the dire need for redemption, first arose. David's term for this power of discernment is 'sola peccati recordatione', 'solely through recollection of [original] sin':

Quis enim addubitet, benignissime Domine, quin primo adspectu omnia statim mundi peccata eorumque reatum dirissime diluendum ob oculos habueris, ipso horti ingressu; vel sola peccati a primis parentibus in horto commissi recordatione? Ita ipso statim limine in illud impegisti. Horreat itaque (o homo) cor tuum et caro tua, quandocumque de peccato perpetuando recogitas.

For who would doubt, most benign Lord, that you had at the very first glance, at the selfsame entry into the garden, immediately before your eyes all the sins of the world, and also the guilt caused by them, fit most cruelly to be absolved; or that you realised all this solely through recollection of the sin committed by our first parents in paradise? Because you fastened upon that at the very threshold / entrance [of the garden]. And

<sup>11</sup> Ibidem 6.

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem 8.

so (O Man) let your heart and flesh tremble, whenever you consider the commission of sin.<sup>13</sup>

And yet, even while reflecting on the fearsome solitude of Christ, David insists on recalling that such solitude, like every other *passio Christi*, was endured on our behalf, to secure human salvation. If Christ is indeed the Son of Man, in that he 'receives in himself our sorrow, our fear and trembling', then his solitude, paradoxically, can be seen to express solidarity with his fellow men, as David avows immediately after evoking the dissimiles of the leaf and the straw: 'Hope in God, since still we shall trust in him: he is my salvation, and my God. Because God is our refuge and our strength, our helper in tribulation'.<sup>14</sup> This assertion, based on *Psalm* 42:6, concludes with the paraphrase of *Numbers* 23:19, cited above: 'God is not a man, that he should lie, nor as the son of man, that he should be changed'. This paradox constitutes the subject of Emblem 3, "Angelic Consolation".

*Imago* 3 closely follows *Luke* 22:43: fervently praying, Jesus kneels alone in the garden, where an angel sent from heaven consoles and fortifies him (A) [Fig. 8.9]. He is compared—again via analogies of pose, gesture, and/or facial expression—to Josue, whom God commands to take charge of his people valiantly, in *Josue* 1:6–7 (B); to Paul on the storm-battered ship, who received assurances from an angel that none of his fellow passengers would perish, as Paul himself attests in *Acts* 27:23–25 (C); to Elijah, fleeing the wrath of Jezebel, whom an angel touches twice, in *3 Kings* 19:7, and provides with food and drink, giving him the strength to reach Damascus and anoint the kings of Syria and Israel (D); to an artisan labouring at his forge, whom a fellow coppersmith encourages to set about the task of soldering, that is, of strengthening Israel, in *Isaiah* 41:7 (E); to Daniel, deserted by his companions, who lies 'in a great consternation', his face 'close to the ground', and is 'touched' and 'lifted up' by the Lord who then assures him that he and his people shall be saved, in *Daniel* 10:7–11 and 12:1 (F); and to Esther, whom Ahasuerus empowers to speak on behalf of her people, when he lays the golden sceptre upon her neck, in *Esther* 15:14 (G). All these episodes treat seclusion as the necessary initial stage of a spiritual process leading ultimately to communal salvation; the solitary protagonists are emboldened to return to the people they had left behind, to labour in their best interests and advocate for them. The epigram makes a similar point: 'He who caused all things to be, who by his word contains everything,

<sup>13</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>14</sup> Ibidem 6: 'Spera in Deo, quoniam adhuc confitebimus illi: salutare vultus mei, et Deus meus. Deus siquidem noster refugium et virtus, adiutor in tribulationibus'.



FIGURE 8.9 *Theodoor Galle and workshop of Philips Galle, Emblem 3, "Angelica Consolation", in Jan David, *Paradisus sponsi et sponsae* [...] (Antwerp, Ex officina Plantiniana, apud Ioannem Moretum: 1607; reprint ed., Antwerp, Ex officina Plantiniana, apud Balthasarem et Ioannem Moretos fratres: 1618). Engraving, 8°. Chicago, IL, The Newberry Library (Case W 1025.22).*

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endeavours to profit you by his aid (alas, in vain):<sup>15</sup> 'In vain', because sinful humankind rejects the Lord's efforts to save them.

The commentary opens by emphasising how solitary Christ was when he prayed to be succoured at Gethsemane. So great was his solitude, avers David, that it exceeds our powers of comprehension: 'You know not, O man, the solitude of God ("secretum Dei"), nor are you able in this way to penetrate his mysteries through meditation'.<sup>16</sup> David reminds the votary that he sees Jesus—in this spiritual exercise—as if from afar: he is like Moses, who catching sight of the burning bush, desired more closely to observe this great mystery ('propinquus desideras intueri mysterium'), but was instructed by God, in *Exodus* 3:5, 'Come not nigh hither'. So too, we are told to respect the privacy of Christ: our questions about the meaning of the scene before us—the seeming frailty of our Redeemer—must be addressed not to him, but instead to the angel who has come as much to console, as to hold our importunities at bay.<sup>17</sup> The angel thus undertakes to shore up Christ, even while reinforcing his seclusion and heightening our awareness of it.

At the same time, the consolatory angel, by highlighting the human frailty of Christ, makes apparent the degree to which he is like us. The 'defect of nature' ('naturae defectionem') that necessitates the angel's ministrations must be seen to originate in that aspect of Christ—his essential humanity—that he, as the incarnate Word, received from the 'sons of men'. Seen in this way, his solitude, rather than distancing him from us, draws him closer: 'But yet, I reckon that [the angel] conferred all that [viz., strength and spirit] very little upon him, instead conferring it very much upon us; since he received that self-same defect of nature on our behalf, and permitted himself to be comforted for the sake of comforting us'.<sup>18</sup> In caring for him, therefore, the angel signifies how greatly Jesus cares for us. We might put this as follows: the angel reveals, via a divinely crafted visual analogy, how the Lord's solitude may be construed, paradoxically, as the measure of his solidarity with needful humankind. David chides the votary for failing to recognise that Jesus, even now, is connected to him: perturbed by what we see from without—namely, the image of Christ forlorn and abandoned—we neglect to take comfort from what is concealed

<sup>15</sup> Ibidem, *imago* 3: 'Omnia qui fecit, qui continet omnia verbo,/ Spectat (et heu cassam),  
qua tibi prosit opem'.

<sup>16</sup> Ibidem 10: 'Nescis, o homo, secretum Dei neque ita cogitans rimaris arcana eius'.

<sup>17</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>18</sup> Ibidem 11: 'Attamen, parum admodum id totum ipsi contulisse existimo, sed nobis quamplurimum; cum et hanc ipse naturae defectionem nostri causa suscepit, nobisque consulendi gratia se ita permiserit consolari'.

within, where 'veiled by the appearance of infirmity', Christ divinely gathers strength for the redemptive task at hand—the self-sacrifice soon to be enacted for our benefit.<sup>19</sup>

In fact, the appearance of weakness has been staged by Christ himself, to certify the promise made in *Matthew* 11:28: 'Come to me all you that labour, and are burdened, and I will refresh you'. David puts forward a syllogism to argue this point: since Jesus is the source of angelic virtue, and also the consoler of all faint-hearted men, it follows that in showing us how an angel sustained him, he was actually confirming his power to assuage suffering and bolster the weak and the oppressed. The Agony in the Garden is thus enacted with us in mind: it serves to verify *Matthew* 11:28, and to fulfil *Isaiah* 41:14: 'Fear not, thou worm of Jacob, you that are dead of Israel; I have helped thee'. In short, *imago* 3 demonstrates that Christ, in and through his solitude, empowers and consoles us, converting fear into comfort, feebleness into strength:

Nonne et hic te vocantem audimus, Domine: "Venite ad me omnes, qui laboratis [...]"? "Noli timere, vermis Iacob". [...] Evidem ab Angelo confortari sum visus, qui virtus sum angelorum et pusillanimum consolator, ut nulla te frangeret adversitas nec in quantavis mole difficultatum animum desponderes. Eamus itaque pusilli et miseri, desolati et laborantes in remigando: videamus hoc verbum, quod factum est et ostendit nobis magister noster, Dux noster et Iesus noster. [...] Accede, inquam, et, quisquis es, in Deo Iesu nostro per Angelum confortato, te cum Iosue divinitus animatum et confortatum existima. Audi ipsi, audi et tibi dictum a Domino. Confortare et esto robustus valde. Omnia poteris in eo, qui te confortat, quem pro te sic infirmatum consideras.

And do we not hear you, Lord, calling to us here: "Come to me all you that labour [...]"? "Fear not, thou worm of Jacob. [...]" I [Jesus], the strength of angels, consoler of the faint-hearted, am seen to be strengthened by an angel, in order that no setback may crush you, nor any heavy weight of difficulties cause you to lose heart. And so, puny and wretched, desolate and laboriously rowing, let us go and see this word made [flesh], which our teacher and guide, our Jesus exhibits to us. [...] Come, I say, whoever you are, and in our God Jesus strengthened by the angel, consider yourself divinely quickened and fortified. Hear what the Lord said to him, hear what he also said to you: "Take courage, and be very strong. You shall

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<sup>19</sup> Ibidem 10.

accomplish everything in him who strengthens you, whom you observe deprived of strength in this way for your sake".<sup>20</sup>

The reference to rowing ('laborantes in remigando') derives from *Mark* 6:46–51. After the miracle of the loaves and fishes, Christ dismisses the disciples and climbs a nearby mountain to pray by himself. Meanwhile, the disciples take a boat and row across the sea of Galilee, leaving him 'alone on the land'. Seeing them from the shore, about the fourth watch of the night, Christ comes toward the ship, 'walking upon the sea', and 'would have passed them', as Mark puts it, had they not cried out, astonished by this miracle. He first reassures them, 'Have a good heart, it is I, fear ye not', then enters the boat, and finally, calms the strong wind that has impeded their rowing. David implicitly draws a parallel between this episode and the Agony in the Garden: in both cases, Christ withdraws to a private place, and yet continues to keep watch over his disciples. As he comforts them in *Mark* 6, when they call out to him, so his agony in the garden offers comfort to the votary who realises that Christ suffers for his sake, and for the salvation of humankind. Like the disciples in the ship, we shall find ourselves journeying with Jesus, if we keep in mind this thought that unites us to him, as surely as does the Eucharist. David adjures us to see ourselves consoled in and through Christ:

Audi tu quoque, quid in Christo ad iter hoc arduum accincto, tum Eliae,  
 tum tibi, solaminis animique det Angelus. "Surge, comedere, grandis enim  
 tibi restat via. Surripe deiectum animum, coeptum bonum instaura.  
 Panis caelestis cor tuum confirmet vinumque divinum laetificet, ac  
 grandis restans via ad patriam grandem tibi quoque ingeneret animum  
 pertingendi".

Listen, too, what comfort and affection the angel offers now to you, now to Elijah, in Christ well girded for this arduous journey: "Raise your dejected spirit, renew the good thing undertaken; let celestial bread confirm your heart and let heavenly wine gladden it; and as well, let the great distance still remaining engender in you the will to reach the [divine] fatherland".<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Ibidem 11.

<sup>21</sup> Ibidem 12.

Emblem 3 concludes with a series of scriptural types for the unity of Christ and the votary. *Christus secretus* ('Christ alone, apart') is likened to the coppersmith in *Isaiah* 41:7, who rallies the smithy at his forge, urging him to 'solder' himself to God and his fellow men: 'Let the passion and infirmity of Christ strengthen us, and let his charity firmly unite us in him'.<sup>22</sup>

He brings to completion the image of the prophet, in *Daniel* 10:7–11, deserted by his brethren, who 'being left alone saw [a] great vision', and lying 'close to the ground', was lifted up by the Lord's hand. In turn, David construes both Daniel and Christ as figures of the votary, isolated by sin, whom the merciful Lord buoys up and sustains. He layers *Joshua* 7:10, onto *Daniel* 10:10:

Anima nostra sicut terra sine aqua tibi: defecit cor nostrum et caro nostra; [...] cum servo tuo, viro desideriorum, prae debilitate collapsi iacemus. Surge, surge, cur iaces pronus in terra? Dominus Iesus in faciem super terram procubuit, ut tu viriliter erigereris. Ecce, manus confortans tanget te erigetque in genua, ut invalescas.

Our soul is to you like waterless earth: our heart and our flesh have deserted us; [...] with your servant, the man of desires, we lie prone, by reason of weakness. Arise, arise, why stoop to the ground, lying down? The Lord Jesus sank down, his face to the ground, that you might stoutly be raised. Behold, the strengthening hand shall touch you and lift you to your knees, that you may prevail.<sup>23</sup>

In this passage, the triple layering of the votary, Christ, and Daniel, signifies the strangely commensal nature of the solitary Passion, as revealed at Gethsemane. Citing *Matthew* 2:18, David predicts that the companionless voice in Rama, wailing for her lost children, will become the gladsome voice of a mother, rejoicing in her many offspring, if we properly meditate the Agony in the Garden. The point of the spiritual exercise put forward in this emblem, then, is to discern how Jesus and we combine in his solitude, at one and the same time separable and inseparable, disjoined and yet joined.

Emblem 4, "Sudor sanguineus" ("Bloody Sweat"), describes solitary prayer as the spiritual medium that conjoins the Redeemer with the penitent sinner desirous of redemption [Fig. 8.10]. The bloody sweat of Christ functions as the chief agent of coalition between Jesus and the votary, whom the epigram compares to parched earth made newly fertile by the torrential outpouring of the Lord's blood. The adjective 'arida' ('arid') calls up the complementary images of

<sup>22</sup> Ibidem: 'Passio et infirmitas Christi confortet nos nosque eius conglutinet charitas'.

<sup>23</sup> Ibidem 12–13.



FIGURE 8.10 *Theodoor Galle and workshop of Philips Galle, Emblem 4, "Bloody Sweat", in Jan David, Paradisus sponsi et sponsae [...] (Antwerp, Ex officina Plantiniana, apud Ioannem Moretum: 1607; reprint ed., Antwerp, Ex officina Plantiniana, apud Balthasarem et Ioannem Moretos fratres: 1618). Engraving, 8°. Chicago, IL, The Newberry Library (Case W1025.22).*

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dry soil ('arida terra') and parched soul ('arida anima'): 'Drink the divine body's bloody rain, you parched [soil/soul]; and turn barren seeds into red-purple roses'.<sup>24</sup> The conversion of the barren soul into a flowering garden adverts to the floral imagery upon which the *Messis* as a whole is premised, and intimates that the practitioner of David's spiritual exercises must implant Christ within his soul, allowing it to be fertilised by the Saviour's solitary suffering. *Imago 4* draws attention to the loneliness of Jesus, showing him unattended by the three disciples whom he charged to keep vigil (A). Conversely, Galle situates us in the gap between James and John at left and Peter at right, thus implying that we, unlike them, should stand watch. Just as Christ, who stood in *imago 2*, and knelt in *imago 3*, now crouches down, bent nearly double by the burden he bears, so our vantage point has been lowered to match his [Figs. 8.8–8.10]. Indeed, we seem to be lower than he, looking up at his clenched hands and detrued face, as if from ground level. Our position matches that ascribed to *anima* in the epigram, which identifies both soul and soil as *arida*—thirsting for the blood that Jesus appears to wring from his face and hands. The four corollary scenes visible on the other side of the stockade enforce the analogy between parched soil and thirsty soul: if Christ is like Simon the high priest, in *Ecclesiasticus* 50:16, who 'stretched forth his hand to make a libation, and offered of the blood of the grape', then we are like the altar vessel that received this offering (B); if he is like Abel, slain by Cain, then we are like the 'earth that opened its mouth', in *Genesis* 4:10, and drank the innocent 'brother's blood' (C); if he is like Elijah, in *3 Kings* 18:32–35, who 'built with stones an altar [...] and made a trench for water', and three times 'pour[ed] water upon the burnt offering', then we are like the altar and the trench 'drenched with water' (D); and if he is like Judas Maccabeus, in *1 Machabees* 6:34, 'who shewed the elephants the blood of grapes, and mulberries to provoke them to fight', then we are like those elephants, impelled by his blood to fight for him, and, if need be, to endure bloody martyrdom in his name (E).

The commentary argues that the blood of Christ has the power to bind us to him, as if in wedlock: it recalls or, better, fulfils the matrimonial promise implicit in the blood shed by Sephora's son, in *Exodus* 4:25–26; having circumcised him, Sephora declared to God, and prophetically to Christ, 'You are to me today a bridegroom in blood'. Christ's sacrificial blood, shed in the form of bloody sweat, marries to him the sinful but penitent soul, as David avers: 'Therefore hasten, Sephora (the sinful soul), take up the very sharp, rocky blade of true penitence, and circumcise your heart; and say to your beloved,

<sup>24</sup> Ibidem, *imago 4*: 'Arida, sanguineos Dii bibe corporis imbres;/ Et mala purpureis semina verte rosis'.

who is radiant, rubicund, and chosen out of thousands [...], “You are to me today a bridegroom in blood”.<sup>25</sup> David construes the blood poured forth at Gethsemane, as an earnest of the saving blood spilled during the Passion; it infuses the Eucharist with sacramental grace, converting the corporal species of bread into the bread of life that nourishes us here and now, and which we shall eat in fellowship with angels in the life to come. Moreover, the power of the Holy Blood confers efficacy on all good works performed in Christ’s name; when we exert ourselves, sweating to do good, his blood imbues our actions and subsumes them into his:

Nequibamus enim in sudore non tantum vultus nostri, sed neque totius corporis operari cibum, qui non perit, qui vitam suppeditaret aeternam, nisi prius, Christe, pro nobis sudasses sanguinem. En, ut exinde sudor noster pro te proveniens, factus est efficax; ut nec scyphus aquae frigidae pro te datus, magna mercede sua sit cariturus.

For we would be unable by the sweat of our brow, or even of our whole body, to produce the imperishable food that furnishes eternal life, had you, Christ, not first sweated blood for us. Behold, thereafter our sweat, coming forth for you, is made efficacious; so that even a cup of cold water, given in your name, should not lack a great reward.<sup>26</sup>

The conviction that the solitary Passion, as expressed by the bloody sweat of Christ, encompasses the whole of his mystical body—viz., all Christians who sweat with him, striving to imitate his virtues—issues from the collateral belief that sinful humankind was responsible for the great weight that pressed him down at Gethsemane, and even now continues to weigh upon him. It is as if we were operating a winepress, in which Christ is constantly being pressed; the pressure exerted by human sin, by causing his blood to flow, also results in the absolution of sin and the alleviation of sin’s dire effects: ‘Even so, let us press fully this grape of the sweating Lord’.<sup>27</sup> David drives home the point that our sinful blood is subsumed into the saving blood of Christ; ever since Cain, the earth has been bloodied by our sins, but the Saviour’s blood now saturates and expiates the former stain. The Holy Blood incorporates us in another sense as

<sup>25</sup> Ibidem 14: ‘Curre igitur, Sephora (peccatrix anima), tolle acutissimam verae poenitentiae petram et circumcide cor tuum: et dic dilecto tuo, candido et rubicundo, electo ex milibus, [...] “Sponsus sanguinum tu mihi es hodie”.

<sup>26</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>27</sup> Ibidem 15: ‘Verum turgentem hunc sudantis Domini botrum penitius exprimamus’.

well: it speaks to us directly; by turns solicitous and admonitory, it cries out, both to God and humankind, for mercy, grace, and greater charity.<sup>28</sup> This is to say that the third and final phase of the Agony in the Garden, when viewed by reference to the Holy Blood, turns out to be doubly dialogic, in that Christ's prayer of contemplation is addressed jointly to the Father and to us.

David insists on viewing the sweating of blood in this light, when he distinguishes between the mercy of Christ, as expressed in *Luke 22:44*—‘And his sweat became as drops of blood, trickling down upon the ground’—with God’s vengeful attitude toward the sinful world, as described in *Ezechiel 9:8–9*—‘I fell upon my face, and crying, I said: Alas, alas, alas, O Lord God, wilt thou then destroy all the remnant of Israel, by pouring out thy fury upon Jerusalem?’ In his wrath, the Lord, speaking through Ezechiel, threatens to destroy Israel, whereas Jesus instead pours out his conciliatory blood. God’s anger against Jerusalem is provoked by the people’s false presumption that the ‘Lord hath forsaken the earth, and [...] seeth not’, whereas Jesus, even in his solitude, communes with Jerusalem, renewing its very soil with his blood:

Bene itaque nunc actum nobiscum, Domino sanguinem sudante. Sic etenim sanguineo rore tellurem imbuit, vice furoris super eandem effundendi. [...] Nunquid et illud Osee completum est nobis in bonum?—“Peccata inundaverunt, et sanguis sanguinem tetigit?” Gratia per vas rimarum plenum effluxit et sanguis Christi in terram sanguine peccatorum madentem cecidit, ut eam expiatet.

And so, we are lucky in the Lord’s sweating of blood. For he stained the earth with bloody dew, instead of pouring fury upon it. [...] Was not that which the prophet Osee spoke [in *Osee 4:2*] perfected for the good on our behalf: “Sins have overflowed all, and blood hath touched blood”. Grace has flowed through the vessel full of chinks, and the blood of Christ has fallen upon the ground soaked by the blood of sinners, in order to purify the earth.<sup>29</sup>

The reference to the leaky vessel through which grace flows, as if through a sieve, alludes to the antithetical image of the rusty pot, in *Ezechiel 24:12*, that is melted upon burning coals and consumes the filth it contains. By contrast, the saving blood of Christ mingles with the blood of sinners, soaking into the blood-touched earth. This sanguinary image reverses Osee’s image of God’s

28 Ibidem 16.

29 Ibidem 15.

implacable justice meted out against blood touched by sinful blood. In its place, David substitutes a final allusion to the spiritual fellowship felt mutually by Christ and his spiritual offspring; he compares them to the eagle and its nestlings, described in *Job* 39:30, where they signify the prophet's unbreakable bond with God and unshakable faith in divine providence: 'Since you, Lord, have given yourself to us as prey dripping with blood, let us like sons of the eagle lick your blood (by applying the fruit thereof to ourselves).'<sup>30</sup> This paraphrase from *Job* distils the paradox upon which Emblems 2, 3, and 4 turn: the communal solitude, the solitary community exemplified by Christ during the Agony in the Garden.

### **"The Solitude of Christ on the Road to Calvary"**

The antitheses reconciled in and through the contemplative prayer of Christ, of course signify the nature of contemplative prayer generally: the exercitant withdraws from the world, not as an end in itself, but in order more fully to unite with God, and thereafter, returns renewed and purified to his former life. As Emblems 2, 3, and 4 parse different stages of Christ's solitary withdrawal into contemplation, revealing how complex is the condition of solitude, so Emblems 28, 29, and 30 demonstrate how in bearing the cross, he exchanges solitude for active ministry, interacting with his tormentors and followers, whom he invites to join him in sharing the burden of the cross [Figs. 8.8–8.10, 8.11–8.13]. As Emblems 2, 3, and 4 portray variations on the same pose, so his pose in Emblems 28, 29, and 30 signifies that these three emblems are to be read in tandem. And as blood is the medium that privately joined us to Christ in the previous three emblems, so the unifying instrument that joins us, now publicly, is the cross.

Emblem 28, "Baiulatio crucis" ("Carrying of the Cross"), centres on an image of Christ, alone on the road to Calvary, trudging beneath the weight of the cross [Fig. 8.11]. He stands rather than kneeling, but in every other respect, he is posed as in *imago* 4, and this identifies the cross as the physical manifestation of the spiritual burden already borne at Gethsemane. The epigram explains why the cross is so heavy: 'Who is this new Atlas, who though the world is for him a light burden, is [yet] overburdened by the cross, laden with

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30 Ibidem 17: 'Cum enim tu te nobis in sanguinolentam praedam dederis, Domine, ut filii aquilae sanguinem tuum (fructum eius nobis applicando) lambemus'.



FIGURE 8.11 *Theodoor Galle and workshop of Philips Galle, Emblem 28, "Carrying of the Cross", in Jan David, *Paradisus sponsi et sponsae* [...] (Antwerp, Ex officina Plantiniana, apud Ioannem Moretum: 1607; reprint ed., Antwerp, Ex officina Plantiniana, apud Balthasarem et Ioannem Moretos fratres: 1618). Engraving, 8°.*  
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IMAGE © THE NEWBERRY LIBRARY, CHICAGO, IL.

the sins of the world?<sup>31</sup> The *imago*'s subsidiary scenes, supplemented by further analogies in the commentary, mainly consist of Old Testament types for Christ, the sacrificial lamb of God (A): he is compared to Job, abandoned by everyone, who nevertheless shoulders his afflictions and proclaims the justice of God, in *Job* 9:13–15 (B): 'God [...] under whom they stoop that bear up the world. What am I then, that I should answer him, and have words with him?' Jesus is the lamb, 'unspotted and undefiled', upon which all the world's sins are heaped, in *John* 1:29 and *1 Peter* 1:19 respectively (C). He is the living image of the buck goat, prescribed as a princely sin offering, in *Leviticus* 4:22–24 and 6:25 (D). He is like and yet unlike Isaac, who bore the wood of his impending immolation (E): whereas Abraham imposed this burden on his unwitting son, in *Genesis* 22:6, Jesus chose to bear the cross on his own, that is, both willingly and knowingly. Therefore, he fulfils the prophecy, in *Isaiah* 53:4, of the Man of Sorrows who 'hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows', just as the cross he alone shoulders gives tangible form to the 'yoke of their burden, and the rod of their shoulder, and the sceptre of their oppressor', that God promises to uplift, in *Isaiah* 9:4 (F). Jesus also prefigures Heraclius, who unaided and barefoot, conveyed the true cross to Jerusalem (H). In the visual economy of *imago* 28, Heraclius doubles as the image of Abimilech, in *Judges* 9:48–49, another type of Christ carrying the cross, who 'cut down the bough of a tree, and laying it on his shoulder, and carrying it, said to his companions: "What you see me do, do you out of hand"' (G). Finally, the arc of the covenant, just below Heraclius-Abimilech, permanently fitted with staves that allow it to be carried whithersoever God requires, signifies Christ's readiness to carry the cross, as well as our obligation to imitate him readily, in the manner of Abimilech's men.

These parallels start with visual analogies for the singularity and solitariness of Christ, and end with a pair of types—Abimilech and his men, the arc and its carrying-poles—that encourage us to accompany him in taking up the cross. The commentary enlarges upon this progression from solitude to solidarity. David asks us to consider two options: either to make common cause with Jesus and lighten his burden, or to exacerbate his torment by sequestering him and eschewing the cross. In the image, Christ's head turns toward the viewer, while in the commentary, he is heard to converse with him:

Quapropter, o homo, cuius id amore suscepit, attende et vide; paululum de onere subleva; subiice humerum tuum cruci, et porta illam. Ne acedieris vinculis eius: vincula enim illius alligatura salutaris.

31 Ibidem, *imago* 28: 'Quis novus hic Atlas, cui cum levis orbis, iniquum/ Orbis onusta malis crux sua pondus habet?'

Libenter, Domine, et quidem iam nunc, quia non est discipulus super magistrum suum. Sed quid vos movit, semen Chanaan et non Iuda, ut ita Jesus Christus baiulans sibi crucem, a vobis palam, et credo praeconis voce praecedente, ad mortem duceretur? [...] Ut qui tam esset destabilis, ut nullus eius crucem attingere dignaretur, tamque insignis latro existeret, ut prae omnibus videretur traducendus?

Therefore, O man, for love of whom I took up that [weight], attend and behold; lighten the load a little; put your shoulder to the cross and carry it. Let these chains not sadden you, for they are chains binding you to salvation.

Willingly, Lord, and indeed already now, for no disciple is above his master. But what moved you, seed of Chanaan and not of Judah, openly to let Jesus be led to his death, bearing the cross, and, as I believe, preceded by the voice of a herald? [...] And so detestable, that noone might deign to touch his cross?<sup>32</sup>

Indeed, David explicitly construes the cross as a figure for the votary, by way of an analogy between Christ and the mother eagle, in *Deuteronomy* 32:11, which teaches its young to fly heavenward by first bearing them on outstretched wings: 'As the eagle enticing her young to fly, and hovering over them, he spread his wings, and hath taken him and carried him on his shoulders'. On this account, the cross is synonymous with the penitent sinner, whom Christ raises up and delivers from the depths of sin. David layers onto this famous passage, the prophecy promising redemption to the people of God, in *Isaiah* 46:3–4: 'Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob [...], who are carried by my bowels, are borne up by my womb. [...] I have made you, and I will bear; I will carry and will save'. Viewed in this light, the cross signifies the close relationship—parental, maternal, and natal—between Jesus and the votary, and as such, it functions as a sign not merely of isolation and degradation, but also of comradeship and familiarity.

That the cross functions for David as an instrument of Christian sociability becomes even more apparent when he refers to it, in closing, as the 'seminary of eternal glory' ('aeternaeque gloriae seminarium')—the school of our future salvation. He asseverates that if we imitate St. Andrew in venerating the cross, reciting with him the prayer "Salve crux veneranda", we shall be received by Christ himself; the cross is personified as the agent of this wished-for reception: ' [...] and let us say with Saint Andrew, "Hail, you venerable cross";

<sup>32</sup> Ibidem 110–11.

let my master Christ receive me through you, he who hung down upon you'.<sup>33</sup> Through the cross, Jesus becomes our companion and interlocutor, concludes David. Ergo, it should be received willingly and with due devotion, 'as if we were seeing Christ himself place it upon us with his very hands' ('quam si Dominum Iesum videamus suis eam manibus nobis imponentem'), and were hearing him 'ask us to bear and embrace it in his honour' ('rogantem [...], ut illam in ipsius honorem amplectamur gestemusque').<sup>34</sup> Only when he is ready to resume carrying it, should we relinquish the cross that gains us access to the kingdom of heaven by way of Christ.

Emblem 29, "Simon Cyrenaeus" ("Simon of Cyrene"), poses the corollary question, how does one enter into the fellowship of the cross [Fig. 8.12]? The answer, as the exegetical analogies marshalled in *imago* 29 indicate, and the epigram confirms, is by exercising compassion: 'Do you pity him who groans beneath the heavy weight of the cross? Take up yours, and you shall be to Christ another bearer'.<sup>35</sup> The implication is twofold: first, we should assist Jesus in bearing his cross, making it our own, meditatively and empathetically; second, by patiently bearing the many actual 'crosses' that beset us in this life, we convert ourselves into true 'imitatores Christi baiulantis crucem'. The *imago*'s lower register, bifurcated into two scenes, contrasts Simon of Cyrene (E), who assists Christ to carry the cross (at left), and then bears its full weight (at right), with the centurion (C), who burdens Christ with the cross (left), and then forcefully drags him to Golgotha (right). The admonitory gesture of Christ in the righthand scene (he points back at the cross-bearing Simon) alludes to his collaborative agency, for, as the commentary states, assiduity of will combined with the sure providence of God leads us, as surely as it led Simon, to the performance of charitable works. The commentary characterises the centurion as an epitome of hard-heartedness: he compels Simon to assist Jesus, not for pity's sake, but rather, to ensure that he not expire before being crucified; the second version of C, in which he continues to drag Jesus onward, exposes the inhumanity veiled by his seeming show of compassion.<sup>36</sup> The two versions of E, however, tell a different story. The one at left portrays Simon drafted to co-carry the cross, under the centurion's supervision; he exemplifies acquiescence

33 Ibidem 112–113: '[...] et cum S. Andrea dicamus: "Salve, crux veneranda"; ipse per te me recipiat, qui peperdidit in te, Magister meus Christus'.

34 Ibidem 113.

35 Ibidem, *imago* 29: 'Tune crucis miserare sua sub mole gementem?/ Tolle tuam, et Christo baiulus alter eris'.

36 Ibidem 115.



FIGURE 8.12 *Theodoor Galle and workshop of Philips Galle, Emblem 29, "Simon of Cyrene", in Jan David, *Paradisus sponsi et sponsae* [...] (Antwerp, Ex officina Plantiniana, apud Ioannem Moretum: 1607; reprint ed., Antwerp, Ex officina Plantiniana, apud Balthasarem et Ioannem Moretos fratres: 1618). Engraving, 8°. Chicago, IL, The Newberry Library (Case W1025.22).*

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to contingent circumstances.<sup>37</sup> The one at right portrays him more fully as Christ's cross-bearer, now not by chance, but by intention ('non casu'), not simply obediently, but industriously ('de industria'); he exemplifies how we, as Christians, must accept every cross offered to us by divine providence, in imitation of Christ.<sup>38</sup> More specifically, in this second redaction he epitomises Christian martyrdom: 'For all who piously wish to live in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution. And so accede, O son, to the service of God; prepare your spirit to be tried'.<sup>39</sup>

The first version of "Simon Cyrenaeus" thus functions as a type for the second, in which the Christian image of the cross-bearer, adumbrated at left, is perfected, in fellowship with Christ. This may be why Simon, in scene two, looks so intently at Jesus, whom he appears more fully to imitate. Directly above, other typological analogies cluster around the parabolic figure of the Good Shepherd, from *John* 10:11, who bears a lost lamb, in prefiguration of Christ in scene one, and of Simon in scene two. That the same figure applies equally to Jesus and to Simon signifies the degree to which, through the bearing of Christ's cross, he becomes an *alter Christus*. The typological structure of the *imago*, its before and after arrangement, is further enhanced by the profusion of types gathered in the upper register [Fig. 8.12]. As a matter of fact, the format of this image notably differs from that of other *imagines* in the *Messis*, for the pictorial itinerary begins with an exegetical type (A), rather than with Christ (F). The prefatory analogy between A and F prepares the viewer to discern the crucial analogy between E and F, and, additionally, that between C, E, and F at left and C bis, E bis, and F bis at right. In turn, all these analogies transit through the axial analogue of the Good Shepherd, which operates only in the *imago*—that is, visually—and is not mentioned in the commentary. They are integrated into the key thematic of fellowship around which Emblem 29 revolves. And they follow a bipartite scheme modelled on exegetical typology: as antitype issues from type, so compassion issues from obedience, in the way that the evangelical law of love originates in, but ultimately supplants, the old law. For David, the new law centres on the experience of compassionate fellowship with Jesus, that displaces excessive fear of the Lord:

<sup>37</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>38</sup> Ibidem 115–116.

<sup>39</sup> Ibidem 116: 'Omnes enim, qui volunt pie vivere in Christo Iesu, persecutionem patientur. Accedens itaque, o fili, ad servitutem dei, praepara animam tuam ad tentationem'.

Tollite igitur iugum ferreum, mundi cultores, amatores carnis et servi diaboli. Importabilem tam durae servitutis abiicite sarcinam, et creatori, redemptori gubernatorique vestro servite in spiritu amoris et non cum perturbatione timoris: ea lege, qua super vobis cum suo Patre est protestatus, dicens: "Volo, Pater, ut ubi ego sum, illic sit et minister meus".

Thereupon remove the iron yoke, you venerators of the world, lovers of the flesh, servants of the devil. Cast off the unbearable burden of harsh servitude, and instead serve your creator, redeemer, and governor in a spirit of love, not in fearful disquiet; in the same way that he testified to the Father about you, saying [in *John* 12:26], "Father, I desire that wheresoever I am, there also shall my minister be"<sup>40</sup>

The first type adduced by David derives from *Job* 31:35–37, and applies equally to Jesus, to Simon, and to the votary who imitates Simon's imitation of Christ: 'Who would grant me a hearer, that the Almighty may hear my desire, and that he himself that judgeth would write a book, that I may carry it on my shoulder, and put it about me as a crown? At every step of mine I would pronounce it, and offer it as to a prince'. *Job* protests his innocence, declaring his desire to shoulder the book of his righteous and charitable deeds; he prefigures Christ, who innocently and compassionately bears the book of the cross, inscribed with the sinful deeds of men, which by bearing, he absolves. David jointly interprets *Job* as a proxy, not only for Simon, but for every Christian supplicant who earnestly desires God to recognise his daily labour of bearing sorrows and difficulties in steadfast imitation of Christ:

Nonne quasi volumini inscriptum crucis tuae mysterium, efficaciam, triumphum et gloriam contemplamur? Nonne quotidianum quoque in ea ferenda studium, Patri tuo mirifice gratum munus, aeternaque corona decorandum, hic obsignatum tenemus?

Do we not contemplate the mystery, efficacy, triumph, and glory of your cross, as it were, inscribed in a book? And do we not comprehend here the daily effort of bearing it, a labour marvellously pleasing to your Father, fit to be adorned with an eternal crown, thus to be sealed?<sup>41</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Ibidem 115.

<sup>41</sup> Ibidem 114.

Read in this way, argues David, scene A becomes the type of scenes E-F, and *Job* 31:35–37 becomes the type of *Matthew* 11:28–29, ‘Come to me, all you that labour, and are burdened, and I will refresh you. Take up my yoke upon you [...]’—with this difference: Christ, through the mystery of the Incarnation, appeals now to sense and understanding, giving joy to the votary’s eyes, ears, mind, and heart, by welcoming him to the fellowship of the cross. Since the burden of the cross alleviates the burden of human sin, its ignominious weight dissolves the true source of all human infirmities, making the spirit light and lightsome: ‘Dissolve our chains, I beg you, lift us up, restore us, and all shall be well’.<sup>42</sup>

The other figurative types, most from the Old Testament, some from the New, all of them posed like Jesus and Simon, all bearing burdens, enlarge upon the argument that the cross initiates and sustains our fellowship with Christ [Fig. 8.12]. B depicts *Matthew* 11:28–29, interpolating the heaven-sent cross as luminous image of Jesus’s buoyant yoke. By contrast, D illustrates *Matthew* 23:4: the scribes and Pharisees weigh people down, with the law’s heavy and insupportable strictures, which they themselves lift not a finger to move. G, based on *John* 5:8–9, represents the man who languished thirty-eight years by the pool of Bethesda, whom Jesus healed on the Sabbath, and commanded to take up his pallet, formerly the sign of grievous suffering, now light and easily carried. H straddles both testaments: it depicts the preparation of the store-houses, enjoined by Ezechias, in 2 *Paralipomen* 31:11, and alternatively, the gathering of wheat into the goodman’s barn, from the Parable of the Cockles, in *Matthew* 13:31. The sheaf signifies the harvest of grace gathered in through the Carrying of the Cross. I portrays the furled banner, described in *Isaiah* 5:26, 11:12, and 13:2, that will be unfurled as a triumphant ensign, only if the knight fights the good fight, and preserves the faith, by taking up and sustaining the cross of Christ. K represents Jacob with the ladder he saw in *Genesis* 28:12, as invoked by Jesus in *John* 1:51—the calling of Philip and Nathanael; the ladder prefigures the cross as a staircase to heaven that connects God and men, and also as an instrument of vocation. Finally, L compares the cross to the key of the house of David, prophesied in *Isaiah* 22:22, an explicit oracle of the power of the cross: ‘And I will lay the key of the house of David upon his shoulder: and he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open’. The cruciform figures A to L are subsumed into the most affective of all the analogies cited in David’s commentary, as a gloss on Simon’s coming forth in scenes E-F, and taking of the cross from Jesus in E bis-F bis—viz., 1 *Machabees* 10:74: ‘and [Jonathas] chose ten thousand men, and went out of Jerusalem, and

<sup>42</sup> Ibidem: ‘Vincula, quaeso, nostra dissolve, alleva nos, refice nos, et bene nobis erit’.

Simon his brother met him to help him'. David reads this event as the fulfilment of *Proverbs* 18:19, 'A brother that is helped by his brother, is like a strong city', and prophecy of Simon's co-carrying of the cross: 'Let us help him then: for a brother helped by his brother, is like a strong city'.<sup>43</sup> This exegetical insight anticipates and justifies David's closing admonition to take up Christ's cross, which he compares to a crook, used by the Good Shepherd to catch straying sheep and bring them back into the fold ('in qua temetipsum ut ovem perditam ad ovile reportavit').<sup>44</sup> As Emblem 29's final metaphor, the crook signifies that the cross saves by 'hooking' the lost, lone soul, and restores it to fellowship with Jesus, who himself lost and lonely on the road to Calvary, was once shepherded by Simon, and awaits presently to be shepherded by us.

Emblem 30, "Planctus mulierum" ("Lamentation of the Women"), explores a different kind of solitude—not contemplative solitude, or the paradox of solitary community—but the desolation of the sinful soul [Fig. 8.13]. For the first time in the emblematic sequence we have been examining, Christ finds himself amongst a multitude of companions, the holy women of Jerusalem, whom he addresses and with whom he interacts. Whereas previously his apparent isolation proved to be spiritually interactive, his discourse with the women, ironically, concerns the destruction of Jerusalem, its abandonment to sin, and enforced solitude. The epigram, based on *Luke* 23:31—"For if in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry"—makes patently clear the minatory tone and content of his speech: 'Shed for yourselves, nymphs of Jerusalem, these tears, which, as if they were dry, a sharper flame shall consume'.<sup>45</sup> This paraphrase of *Luke* 23:28 and 23:31 alludes to the imminent destruction of Jerusalem, when like Adam and Eve mourning Abel (D), the women shall be sundered from their sons; like the inhabitants of Jerusalem, in *Jeremiah* 22:10 (E), the women shall mourn the loss of their king, Joachaz—a type of Christ—who 'shall return no more, nor see his native country'. The vertical alignment of Jesus with a funeral procession (C), and with the funeral cortege of Abner (H), recounted in *2 Kings* 3:31, reveals that he is talking about his own death, and about his severance from the formerly chosen, now soon to be forsaken people: 'O hateful procession! O doleful cortege! [...] Behold, the

43 Ibidem 116: 'Aduivemus eum igitur: frater enim, qui adiuvatur a fratre, quasi civitas firma'.

44 Ibidem.

45 Ibidem, *imago* 30: 'Has vobis lacrymas, Solymorum impendite Nymphae,/ Quas velut arantes acrior ignis edet'.

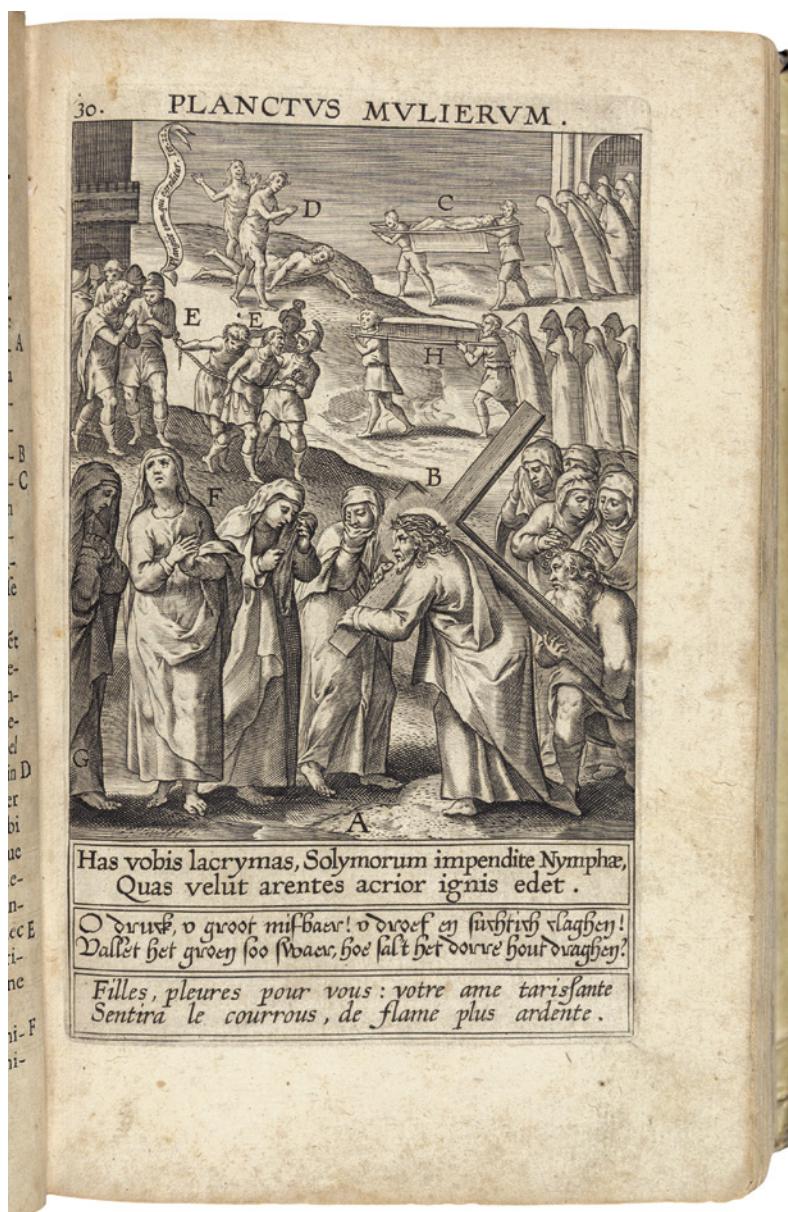


FIGURE 8.13 *Theodoor Galle and workshop of Philips Galle, Emblem 30, "Lamentation of the Women of Jerusalem" in Jan David, *Paradisus sponsi et sponsae* (Antwerp, Ex officina Plantiniana, apud Ioannem Moretum: 1607; reprint ed., Antwerp, Ex officina Plantiniana, apud Balthasarem et Ioannem Moretos fratres: 1618). Engraving, 8°. Chicago, IL, The Newberry Library (Case W 1025.22).*

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deceased is carried out: nay rather, a living man, his mother's only son, goes out of the city, carrying his own bier, and with him a great throng of citizenry'.<sup>46</sup>

The weeping Jerusalemite women have a dual function, as David explains halfway through the commentary: on the one hand, they stand for the soul whose faith has withered and died; having strayed from the Catholic religion, it now finds itself abandoned by Christ, who rescinds the gift of salvation. The lonesome, solitary soul is like the people of Israel, bereft and left to grieve when the kingdom of Christ was transferred to the Gentiles. And like the women who mourned the loss of their Saviour, so the sinful soul now mourns in its godforsaken solitude: 'O fatherland, most worthy of ceaseless lamentation, like unto the soul from which Christ has departed, as if led to his death, and which by this deplorable departure wavers in the Catholic religion'.<sup>47</sup>

On the other hand, the grieving women may also be seen to epitomise penitential sorrow, and as such, their meeting with Christ offers consolation to every sinner who expresses true, tearful contrition. His sick heart, like theirs, shall be healed by the presence of the Lord.<sup>48</sup> Poised between apostatic solitude and penitential companionship, the women embody the antipodes between which Emblems 2–4 and 28–30 oscillate. As figures of the *filia Jerusalem* ('daughter of Jerusalem') and *peccatrix anima* ('sinful soul'), prophesied in *Jeremiah* 6:26 and *Lamentations* 1:4, 1:6, 1:10, and 2:13, they are utterly alone, castaways comparable to noone, assimilable to noone, equivalent to noone ('cui comparabo te, vel assimilabo te [...] cui exaequabo te'); but as figures of the *peccatrix poenitens* ('penitent sinner'), prophesied in *Jeremiah* 9:1, they become as mothers to Christ, mourning him as if he were their only-begotten son ('luctum unigeniti fac tibi').<sup>49</sup>

David contrasts the solitude of the sinner with the sort of solitude epitomised by Christ in Emblems 3 and 4 [Figs. 8.9, 8.10, 8.13]. In *imago* 30, the Virgin Mary exercises this positive manner of contemplative solitude: although she is clearly separated from Jesus—pushed to the left edge of the image, deeply shaded, whereas he is brightly lit, segregated from him by the women who block her view—her empathetic attachment continues to unite her to him, as

<sup>46</sup> Ibidem 118: 'O processionem invisam! O lugubrem pompam! [...] En, defunctus effertur; quin potius, vivus proprium portans feretrum urbe egreditur, filius unicus matris suae, et turba civitatis multa cum illa'.

<sup>47</sup> Ibidem 120: 'O patriam aequa atque animam inexplebili lamento dignissimam, ex qua discedit Christus, quasi ad mortem eductus, in Religione Catholica, dolendo exitu transmigrante!'

<sup>48</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>49</sup> Ibidem 120–121.

David emphasises. Jesus gazes intently in her direction, but her downcast eyes indicate that she catches sight of him spiritually, not corporeally. The spiritual connection that transits between them, as described by David, characterises Mary and Jesus as the *sponsa* and *sponsus* of the *Paradisus*, upon whose intimate relationship, the marriage of the soul to its heavenly bridegroom is modelled. Even if Mary is cruelly severed from her son, she can still see him, advises David: she describes him contemplatively, discerning how his features are indelibly impressed upon her heart, where this internal image ineluctably binds her to him. Contemplative prayer mysteriously transforms separation into a medium of loving connection between its solitary practitioners:

O Maria, quam afflictum est cor tuum! Et quaerentem te video. Quem quaeris, Domina? Quem videre desideras? Sed, si me audis, Maria, virgo prudens et mater pia, in cor tuum introrsum reflecte mentis obtutum affectumque ibi penitus contemplare maternum; et fallor, si non ibi totum cor tuum afflicti filii tui lineamentis imbutum invenies.

O Mary, how afflicted is your heart! I see you searching. Whom do you seek, Mistress? Whom do you desire to see? [...] But, if you hear me, Mary, prudent Virgin and affectionate mother, cast the eye of your mind internally over your heart, and fully contemplate there a mother's love; and if I mistake not, you shall find there your whole heart imbued with the features of your ill-used son.<sup>50</sup>

### Solitude, Ministry, and the Holy Face

The treatment of solitude in Emblems 2–4 and 28–30, and of its varying relation to companionship and community, concludes in Emblem 31, “Veronica, seu Berenice” (“Veronica, or rather, Berenice”), with a detailed account of the image of the bridegroom to be imprinted upon the exercitant's heart [Figs. 8.8–8.10, 8.11–8.13, 8.14]. The imprint of Christ results, as David makes clear, from an intensive exchange between Christ and the votary, that reenacts the encounter between Christ and Veronica during the Carrying of the Cross. Discerned contemplatively—that is, by means of solitary prayer—this indexical image bears witness to the spiritual marriage of *sponsa* and *sponsus*, banishes the sinful soul's isolating solitude, and replaces it with a commutation of attributes, whereby the Holy Face and the votary's face become interchangeable, if not indistinguishable.

<sup>50</sup> Ibidem 119.

*Imago* 31 features Veronica (B), who displays the *vera icon* (A) for our perusal [Fig. 8.14]. She stands alone, but her solitude turns out to be conversable, insofar as her gesture of showing is deictic—directed toward us. Moreover, the three-quarter image of Christ she unveils, its eyes gazing rightward, and her eyes, gazing leftward, indicate that she approached from Christ's left, and that in response, he swivelled his face and eyes toward her. The Veronica preserves the traces of this interactive meeting. The solitariness of St. Veronica, underscored by her position within an aedicular enclosure, thus proves inextricable from her close relationship to Christ and to us. Viewed in this way, she can be seen to exemplify the convergence of spiritual solitude and spiritual synchrony, upon which Emblem 31 dwells, and to signify the solitary means and unitive end of contemplative prayer, as conceived and cultivated throughout the *Messis*.

Behind Veronica are five subsidiary scenes that feature veils as the currency of exchange between God, his saints, and humankind. Plautilla lends her kerchief to Paul on his way to martyrdom (C); stained with his blood, it was later returned to her miraculously by the saint himself. Jesus imprints his face on a painter's linen cloth (E); the painter had failed to capture his features, which shone too brightly to be seen. King Abgar of Edessa, who commissioned the portrait, receives the *acheiropoeton* ('miraculous image') from the painter (D). An angel wipes the face of the martyr Theodore (F), who suffers in imitation of Christ. Elijah stands at the mouth of a cave, his head veiled, and hears, but is not allowed to see, the signs of the Lord's passing forth—a strong wind, an earthquake, a fire, and a 'whistling of gentle air' (G). This is a type for the discernible presence of Christ under the new dispensation, when he may be ascertained by means of all the senses, not least, sight. The tripartite epigram draws a parallel between the Veronica and the capacity of the human mind, heart, and sense to take an impression of Christ, whether through his agency (as in the Latin and Dutch distichs) or ours (as in the French):

[Latin:] With this face examine the face of the heart, and let the mind meditate Jesus, the hand furnish him, the voice utter him.

[Dutch:] Your countenance, Jesus, be pleased to imprint upon my heart; and implant me in you, as in the heavenly firmament.

[French:] Fashion your heart according to this visage and its features, conferring this honour upon it—that it be the heart's sole image.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Ibidem, *imago* 30.



FIGURE 8.14 *Theodoor Galle and workshop of Philips Galle, Emblem 31, "Veronica, that is, Berenice", in Jan David, *Paradisus sponsi et sponsae* (Antwerp, Ex officina Plantiniana, apud Ioannem Moretum: 1607; reprint ed., Antwerp, Ex officina Plantiniana, apud Balthasarem et Ioannem Moretos fratres: 1618). Engraving, 8°. Chicago, IL, The Newberry Library (Case W 1025.22).*

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The commentary begins by citing *Daniel* 10:16, the prophet's avowal that Christ the Word is the true source of the prophecy imminently to be relayed to the Jews of the Persian diaspora: 'And behold, as it were the likeness of a son of man touched my lips, and then I opened my mouth, and spoke'. David interprets this statement as an allusion to the miraculous production of the *vera icon*, arguing that it anticipates the nature of the votary's relation to the Holy Face. Speaking in the voice of the votary, he begs the Lord Jesus to imbue him with the spirit of the 'man of desires' (viz., the spirit of Daniel as a type of Christ, the Son of Man), whereby he shall better be able to sense and taste the Lord's hidden sweetness.<sup>52</sup> As Jesus, in touching the prophet's lips, impressed his spirit upon him, so he imprinted himself upon the sudarium when it touched his Holy Face, and so too, by spiritually touching the 'lips of our hearts', he causes our mouths to speak as if they were his, that is, with his own voice: 'Indeed, I see your face expressed upon the veil; but would that you might touch the lips of my heart! I would open my mouth, and my heart would broadcast the good word: the word of praise, the word of desire, the eternal Word, which is become flesh, and who is you, my Lord and my God'.<sup>53</sup>

David urges the votary to imagine himself dissolving fully into Jesus, whom he must acknowledge as the ultimate source of his strength and salvation.<sup>54</sup> The one-to-one—in this sense, reclusive—encounter with Jesus, is by definition contemplative, but it is also portrayed as the wellspring of gospel ministry, from which issues the preaching of the life, deeds, and doctrine of Christ, the Word made flesh, as bodied forth by *Christus magister* himself. The connection between contemplative prayer and pastoral ministry is implicit in the circumstances of Veronica's meeting with the Lord, which took place in public, as an example to all, but was impelled by affection so profound that it closed her off from the threats and contingencies bearing down from every side.<sup>55</sup> On the contrary, sealed upon her heart, the Holy Face lightsomely bestows the glad tidings of salvation; and not only on her, but also on us, and on all who choose to partake of the benefits secured through the Passion of Christ: 'And we, O happy Christians, upon whom the light of his face was sealed! And on that

<sup>52</sup> Ibidem 122.

<sup>53</sup> Ibidem: 'Video quidem vultum tuum in velo expressum. Sed utinam tangeres labia cordis mei! Aperirem os meum, et eructaret cor meum verbum bonum: verbum laudis, verbum desiderii et Verbum aeternum, quod caro factum est qui es tu, Dominus meus et Deus meus'.

<sup>54</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>55</sup> Ibidem 123.

account, O Lord, you gave joy unto our hearts'.<sup>56</sup> David draws this conclusion from *Psalm 4:7*, another prophecy of the imprinting of the Holy Face: 'The light of thy countenance, O Lord, is signed upon us: thou hast given gladness in my heart'.

The Holy Face, counsels David, ought to mollify our sinful hearts, instilling compunction, by setting before us the image of sin's dire effects upon Christ the lamb of God. He advocates an exegetical reading of the sudarium, construing it as the fulfilment of *Job 16:17–18*: 'For we contemplate you in the same way that you portray yourself through the mouth of your prophet when he says: "My face is swollen with weeping, and my eyelids are dim; these things I have suffered without the iniquity of my hand".<sup>57</sup> Underlying this passage from *Job* are complementary pericopes, such as *Isaiah 53:4* and *53:12*, and *Philippians 2:7*: 'But emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man'. These prefigurations and recollected prophecies lead David startlingly to analogise the beauty of the Lord's face and the deformation of the sinner's face; the Holy Face icon accordingly reveals how Christ substitutes the one for the other, through the expiatory logic of the Passion. David's term for the mechanism of exchange effected by Christ is *commutatio* ('commutation'), which he uses to designate a process at once active and contemplative—the former, in that it comprises both the redemptive agency of Christ and the penitential agency of the votary, as well as their joint works of contrition, expiation, and satisfaction; the latter, in that it involves the unitive melding of Christ and the votary, who through the process of commutative exchange become each other's dissimilar mirror image. On this account, Jesus is visualised as ever at one with the compunctive sinner, alone in his extenuatory suffering, and yet, paradoxically, conjoined with the miscreants for whom he bears the cross. The reflexive imagery of Christ's two faces derives from *Psalm 83:10*: 'Behold, O God our protector, and look on the face of thy Christ'.

Verum est, Domine, quia haec est iniquitas mea, quae speciosum prae filiis hominum sic deformavit. In similitudinem hominum factus, faciem peccatorum sumpsisti eamque Patri obtulisti, qui pro nobis eam sic percuti foedarique permisit.

56 Ibidem: 'O felices et nos Christiani, super quibus lumen vultus huius signatum est! Atque eapropter, o Domine, dedisti laetitiam in cordibus nostris'.

57 Ibidem 124: 'Talem te namque contemplamur, qualem te per Prophetam depingis, dum sic ait: "Facies mea intumuit a fetu et palpebrae meae caligaverunt; haec passus sum absque iniquitate manus meae"'.

O interim felicem commutationem! Faciem tuam nobis, piissime Iesu, dedisti, pro nostra quam assumeras, ut, dum illam sibi semper gratam et complacentem Pater intuetur, nos quoque illi reddamur amabiles.

Respice igitur, sanctissime Deus, omnipotens Domine ac piissime Pater, respice, inquam, in faciem Christi tui, sive quam veluti peccatoris afflictam et confusam ostendit, in qua nostram suscepit miseriam, ut eam beatificet, sive illam, quam ipse nobis per suam gratiam indidit. Respice itaque in faciem qualemcumque Christi tui, et miserere nostri.

It is true, Lord, it is my iniquity which has so deformed the most beautiful of men. Made in the likeness of men, you assumed a sinners' face, and offered it to your Father, who permitted it to be struck and defiled for our sake.

O happy exchange! You gave your face to us, most loving Jesus, in exchange for the face you assumed from us, in order that we too might be rendered pleasing to the Father, while he gazes at that gracious and pleasing face of yours.

Look then, most holy God, omnipotent Lord and most loving Father, look, I say, at the face of your Christ: whether he shows, as it were, the troubled, perplexed face of a sinner, with which he received our misery, that he might beatify our face, or shows that [other] face which by grace he imparted to us. And so behold the face of your Christ, in whatsoever kind, and have mercy upon us.<sup>58</sup>

David, speaking in the solitary voice of a lonely penitent, but also with the corporate voice of sinful humankind, beseeches Christ the judge to wear a sinner's face when judging sinners, and conversely, to confer his just face upon them, sealing and illumining their formerly sinful features with his own. And he enjoins the votary to become, with the Lord's assistance, a living Veronica, receptive to the imprint of Christ the bridegroom ('*sis veluti velum hoc effigie dilecti tui sponsi signatum*').<sup>59</sup>

If *commutatio* is primarily obtained by means of solitary contemplation, its chief purpose is to foster communion with Christ, and through him, with the prophets, such as David and Elijah, who prefigured his coming, with the saints, such as Theodore, who died in his name, and with the mystical body of Christ in heaven. David rehearses the steps leading to the summit of commutation. One begins interiorly by fixing the eyes of spirit on the image of

58 Ibidem.

59 Ibidem.

Christ, the ‘true Solomon’ (viz., the Solomonic bridegroom cited in *Canticle* 3:7 and 3:9), with whom one fervently wishes to become joined. To foster such conjoining, one must first envisage the heart as a tablet taking the imprint of the Holy Face (‘vultum eius [...] in cordis tui tabula contrahas’), and then strive completely to assimilate oneself to this image (‘eique quantum licet assimileris’). Having fashioned oneself into a second Veronica for the beloved Jesus (‘dilecto Iesu tuo quotidie spiritualis Veronica efficiaris’), one will discern a change in the appearance of one’s spiritual face, and consequently, the face one shows to the world will likewise change (‘facies tua [...] mutabitur’). The process of transformation, having begun in private, will express itself publicly, in other words, when the face one wears becomes that of Jesus himself. As such, one will be seen to stand proxy for various types of Christ, as their antitypes. Like David before Achis (who is construed as the image Satan), in 1 *Kings* 27:5 and 29:3, one will find a place ‘in the cities of this country’ (viz., the world), wherein one may dwell faultlessly, as an epitome of virtue. Like the King of Tyre, in *Ezechiel* 28:12–13, one will be recognised as the ‘seal of resemblance’ (viz., the living image of Christ), ‘full of wisdom and perfect in beauty’. Like St. Theodore, one’s Christ-like face shall be wiped clean by a Veronica-like angel, and one’s spirit renewed, even in the presence of one’s tormentors. Like Elijah, standing veiled at the cave’s mouth, in 3 *Kings* 19:11–19, one will sense the kindly presence of God, as if he were the ‘whistling of a gentle air’, and will hear his voice sending one forth to preach to the children of Israel, anoint its future king, proselytise new followers, and appoint one’s chosen successors. The latter reference is to Elijah’s selection of Elisha in 3 *Kings* 19:19. And finally, at the end of one’s life, one will be freed from this ‘house of correction’ and united with the choirs of heaven, as one of the elect.<sup>60</sup>

The sequence leading from contemplation of the Word to its promulgation, recapitulates in small the journey from contemplative solitude to communal solidarity, from solitary to collective prayer, finely parsed in Emblems 2–4 and 28–30 [Figs. 8.8–8.10, 8.11–8.13]. *Solitudo*, as David argues, is complementary to, and indeed, constitutive of the sacramental experience of Christ, to be found in concert with one’s fellow congregants. Hence his account of our oneness with the blood of Christ in Emblem 4, of our Marian unity with Christ bearing the cross in Emblem 30, and here, in Emblem 31, of our apostolic vocation, as prefigured by Elijah [Figs. 8.10, 8.13, 8.14]. Ultimately, these are sacramental images of the precant’s concord with the Church, as David makes clear in a closing “*Oratio*”:

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60 Ibidem 125.

Deus, qui nos ad imaginem tuam Sacramentis renovas et praeceptis, da nobis ita quaesumus in utrisque charismata meliora sectari, ut vultus tui lumine, quod super nos signatum est, conservato, ad faciei tuae tandem conspectum in caelestibus admittamur. Amen.

God, who renews us in your image by means of the sacraments and commandments, we beg you, grant us on both counts eagerly to chase after the better spiritual gifts, in such a way that having preserved the light of your countenance sealed upon us, we may at length be allowed to behold in heaven the sight of your face. Amen.<sup>61</sup>

Spiritual solitude, on this view, coincides with and sponsors the shared spiritual instruments made available through the Church.

### Conclusion

The subset of seven penitential emblems in the *Messis myrrhae et aromatum ex instrumentis ac mysterijs Passionis Christi* teaches the votary how to focus on the intense experience of solitude endured, but also cultivated, by Christ at two key moments of the Passion—the Agony in the Garden and the Carrying of the Cross. How and why such solitude must be cultivated—planted, nurtured, harvested—is what David asks his reader to consider, on the example of Jesus himself. The *Messis*, as we have seen, describes a garden planted with instruments and episodes from the Lord’s Passion, whose fragrance the votary is urged to savour as he strolls down the various pathways, gathering the horticultural specimens into a bouquet piquantly redolent of the *passiones Christi*. Emblems 2, 3, and 4—“Horror in horto” (“Trembling in the Garden”), “Angelica confortatio” (“Angelic Consolation”), and “Sudor sanguineus” (“Bloody Sweat”)—reveal how Christ comes gradually to embrace the Passion by meditating on his sacrifice to come. Emblems 28, 29, and 30—“Baiulatio crucis” (“Carrying of the Cross”), “Simon Cyrenaeus” (“Simon of Cyrene”), and “Planctus mulierum” (“Lamentation of the Women [of Jerusalem]”)—constitute a chiasmus of Emblems 2, 3, and 4: penitential isolation is shown to be a step on the road toward commensal consolation. In the climactic Emblem 31—“Veronica, seu Berenice”—the imprint of the Holy Face on the sudarium exemplifies how the process of meditative prayer, though initially isolating, ultimately fosters unity with Christ in mind, word, and deed. In ceasing to be alone, joining fully with

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<sup>61</sup> Ibidem.

Christ as he joins fully with sinful humankind, suffering on behalf of all sinners, the votary finally learns that meditative solitude is a communitarian instrument or, more precisely, an instrument of charitable ministry. In this sense, David's *Messis* proved to be one of the Jesuit order's earliest and most influential emblem books, for it taught its users—not least the Archdukes Albert and Isabella—how contemplative devotion could be merged with service to Church, the community of the faithful.

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## **PART 3**

### *Landscapes of Solitude*

••



## Giovanni Bellini's *San Francesco nel deserto*

Oskar Bätschmann

Both Giovanni Bellini and his father Jacopo made important contributions to the representation of spiritual elevation in the solitude of the desert, Jacopo with his drawings of St. Jerome and St. Francis and Giovanni with his paintings of these two saints. The most beautiful among these is the large panel of *St. Francis in the Desert* that Marcantonio Michiel (1484–1552) saw in Venice in 1525 [Fig. 9.1]. He listed a series of extraordinary paintings in the house of the rich and erudite collector Taddeo Contarini, including Giorgione da Castelfranco's (1478–1510) *Three Philosophers in a Landscape* and two other works by the same artist, two by Jacopo Palma il Vecchio (1480–1528), three by Giovanni Bellini (1437–1516), and two anonymous works, one from Milan and the other from Brescia. One of the Bellini paintings was a portrait of a woman, now lost, another was a representation of Christ and the third was the panel *St. Francis in the Desert* [Fig. 9.1], that entered the Frick Collection in New York in 1915:

La tauola del San Francesco nel deserto a oglio fu opera die Zuan Bellino, cominciata da lui a M. Zuan Michiel et ha un paese propinquo finito e ricearto mirabilmente.<sup>1</sup>

The panel of St. Francis in the Desert, in oil, was the work of Giovanni Bellini, begun by him for Messer Zuan Michiel, and has a landscape nearby, marvelously finished and thought-out.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Michiel M.A., *Notizia d'opere del disegni: Edizione critica a cura di Theodor Frimmel*, Vienna 1896 (Florence: 2000) 53. See for the text also: *Scritti d'arte del Cinquecento*, ed. P. Barocchi, 3 vols. (Milan–Naples: 1971–1977), vol. 3, 2867–2891, esp. 2882–2883; Rutherglen S., “The Desert and the City: Marcantonio Michiel and the Early History of *St. Francis*”, in Rutherglen S. – Hale C. (eds.), *In a New Light: Giovanni Bellini's St. Francis in the Desert* (New York, NY – London: 2015) 46–57. To avoid misunderstandings: ‘paese’ is to be understood in Michiel's text as ‘landscape’, not as ‘village’.

<sup>2</sup> See for the translation Aronberg Lavin M., “The Joy of St. Francis: Bellini's Panel in the Frick Collection”, *Artibus et Historiae* 56, 27 (2007) 231–256, 252, n.2.



FIGURE 9.1 *Giovanni Bellini, St. Francis in the Desert (ca. 1475–1480). Tempera and oil on poplar panel, 124.4 × 141.9 cm. New York, NY, The Frick Collection (inv. no. 1915.1.03).*

IMAGE © THE FRICK COLLECTION, NEW YORK, NY.

In his 1537 treatise on architecture Sebastiano Serlio (1475–1554) described the patrician Marcantonio Michiel as a profound connoisseur of architecture, and some years later the writer Pietro Aretino (1492–1556) praised him for his learned judgement not only in architecture, but in painting and sculpture as well.<sup>3</sup> Michiel's *Notizia*, his notes on the art collections of noblemen in Venice, Padua, Milan, and other cities in North Italy, give ample evidence of the dense social networks of learned men to which he had access, as Jennifer Fletcher has shown.<sup>4</sup>

3 See Michiel, *Notizia d'opere del disegni* 9.

4 Fletcher J.M., "Marcantonio Michiel: His Friends and Collection", *The Burlington Magazine* 123 (1981) 453–467; Fletcher J.M., "Marcantonio Michiel, 'che ha veduto assai'", *The Burlington Magazine* 123 (1981) 602–608.

Within our context of particular interest is Michiel's 1525 note about Bellini's *St. Francis in the Desert*: apparently, the work was initially commissioned by Zuan Michiel, but the final client, for reasons yet to be ascertained, was Taddeo Contarini.<sup>5</sup> The Venetian patrician Taddeo Contarini, who owned no precious objects other than paintings, could justifiably be numbered with Leon Battista Alberti (1404–1472) among the *artis studiosi*, the committed connoisseurs of art.<sup>6</sup> Jennifer Fletcher has pointed out the importance of the Scuola Grande di San Marco confraternity for both the painter and the patrons.<sup>7</sup> Zuan Michiel, like Giovanni Bellini a member of the Scuola Grande di San Marco, served twice as Guardian Grande and was also secretary to the Council of Ten, one of the governing bodies of the Republic which enjoyed almost unlimited authority in the second half of the fifteenth century.<sup>8</sup> Marcantonio's remark 'begun by him [Giovanni Bellini] for Messer Zuan Michiel' has naturally stimulated art historians' eagerness to speculate about the patron, the authenticity of the painting, its subject, and its dating.<sup>9</sup>

### Iconographic Puzzles

Equally noteworthy is Marcantonio Michiel's designation of the subject, *San Francesco nel deserto* (*St. Francis in the Desert*). Marilyn Aronberg Lavin has pointed out that the Italian 'deserto' as 'any deserted wilderness or countryside', and suggested that it 'provides the key to the painting's meaning by signaling the most unusual aspect'.<sup>10</sup> Recently Susannah Rutherglen has again discussed the meaning of Michiel's word 'paese', hesitating between 'landscape' and 'small town'.<sup>11</sup> In the *Vocabolario della Crusca*, first published in

5 For the provenance of the Frick Bellini see Fletcher J.M., "The Provenance of Bellini's Frick 'St. Francis'", *The Burlington Magazine* 114 (1972) 206–209; Eze A.-M., "From the Grand Canal to Fifth Avenue: The Provenance of Bellini's St. Francis from 1525 to 1915", in Rutherglen – Hale, *In a New Light* 59–79. This Zuan Michiel was no relative to Marcantonio Michiel.

6 See Brown D.A. – Ferino-Pagden S. – Anderson J. (eds.), *Bellini, Giorgione, Titian and the Renaissance of Venetian Painting*, exh. cat., National Gallery of Art (Washington, DC: 2006).

7 Fletcher J.M., "Bellini's Social World", in Humfrey P. (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Giovanni Bellini* (Cambridge: 2004) 13–47, esp. 21–24.

8 *Ibidem* 23.

9 See "Paintings: French, Italian and Spanish", in *The Frick Collection: An Illustrated Catalogue* (New York, NY: 1968), vol. 2, 203–209.

10 Aronberg Lavin, "The Joy of St. Francis" 233.

11 Rutherglen – Hale, *In a New Light* 47–48.

Venice in 1612, 'deserto' was not included as an entry, but it was mentioned under the head word 'Idioto, e idiota' with a quotation from St. Augustine.<sup>12</sup> We may understand 'deserto' as an uninhabited site or landscape. Michiel used the expression *paese* to refer to the marvellous landscape in Bellini's painting, while in around 1500 Isabella d'Este (1474–1539), for example, employed the evocative term *luntani*, meaning 'view into the distance'. The word *paese* occurs quite frequently in Michiel's descriptions of paintings in Venetian collections. In 1521, for example, he noted the presence of 'molte tavolette de paesi' in the house of Cardinal Grimani (1489–1546), and in 1530, in the home of Gabriel Vendramin (1484–1552), he referred to Giorgione's *Tempest* as 'A small landscape, on canvas, with a thunderstorm, a gypsy, and a soldier, by the hand of Giorgio of Castelfranco'; in 1525 he called Giorgione's *Philosophers* '3 phyllosophi in paese'.<sup>13</sup> It seems that Marilyn Aronberg Lavin is correct in suggesting that 'paese' should be understood as 'landscape'.

The connoisseur Michiel notwithstanding, the determination of the subject of Bellini's painting *St. Francis in the Desert* encountered unexpected difficulties among art historians in modern times.<sup>14</sup> The obvious reason for this lay in the painting's deviation from both the long established and the more recent usual Franciscan iconography. In his 1964 *Giovanni Bellini's St. Francis in the Frick Collection*, Millard Meiss summarised his research into the painting as follows: 'As an ecstatic St. Francis in an extended landscape, Bellini's painting would thus seem to be both unprecedented and unique until a much later time'.<sup>15</sup> Meiss referred to the former high altarpiece in the church of San Francesco in Borgo Sansepolcro, commissioned from Sassetta (Stefano di Giovanni 1400–1450) in 1437, painted in Siena and installed by the artist in its intended setting in June 1444.<sup>16</sup> One side of the central panel of this altarpiece shows an enthroned Virgin and Child surrounded by music-making angels; the other shows St. Francis within a mandorla of angels, as he triumphs over the Vices with outstretched arms. The three subjugated Vices of Lasciviousness, Ire, and Miserliness are complemented by three angels personifying Chastity,

<sup>12</sup> *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca* (Venice, Giovanni Alberti: 1612) available from <http://vocabolario.sns.it/html/index.html> (accessed: 04.11.2016).

<sup>13</sup> Michiel, *Notizia d'opere del disegni* 53.

<sup>14</sup> Janson A.F. "The Meaning of the Landscape in Bellini's St Francis in Ecstasy", *Artibus et Historiae* 30 (1994) 41–54.

<sup>15</sup> Meiss M., *Giovanni Bellini's St. Francis in the Frick Collection* (New York, NY: 1964) 21. See also Tintori L. – Meiss M., *The Painting of the Life of St. Francis in Assisi* (New York, NY: 1962).

<sup>16</sup> The polyptych was sold and subdivided in 1810. See Carli E., "Sassetta's Borgo San Sepolcro Altarpiece", *The Burlington Magazine* 93 (1951) 145–152.

Obedience, and Poverty hovering above the saint. The representation of St. Francis by Sassetta was described in Italian by Enzo Carli as 'San Francesco in extasi' ('St. Francis in ecstasy').<sup>17</sup> The Catalogue of the Frick Collection, published in 1968, referred to Meiss's book of 1964 and gives "St. Francis in Ecstasy" as the title of Bellini's painting.<sup>18</sup> Today, following Christian Hecht's definition of representations 'in gloria', we recognise that Sassetta's painting must be regarded iconographically as a representation of "St. Francis in Glory".<sup>19</sup>

Kenneth Clark used the title *St. Francis in the Wilderness* for Bellini's painting, but he did not explicitly say that the saint is shown in the act of composing the Canticle to the Sun. Clark was more precise when he showed how, as he grew older, the painter 'became more in love with the full light of day', and described the painting as 'a true illustration of St. Francis' hymn to the sun'.<sup>20</sup> Meiss assumed that Bellini's painting depicts an episode from the saint's life and tried to identify it, without success. The idea proposed by Clark in 1949 was rejected by Meiss on the grounds that St. Francis's pose seemed to him receptive rather than creative, and that the setting should be a hut in the vicinity of the convent of San Damiano outside Assisi.<sup>21</sup>

Bellini did not follow the prevailing representation of the stigmatisation—although earlier, in the predella of the high altarpiece for the church of San Francesco in Pesaro, he had adhered to the standard iconography, according to which Francis is shown kneeling before a hovering crucified seraph from which he receives the wounds in his hands. Brother Leo, conceived as an eyewitness, conventionally makes his status known through a gesture expressing his astonishment. But here, instead of this, Bellini shows Leo reading, paying no attention to the miracle.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, in both of the drawings in the two books now in Paris and London, Giovanni's father Jacopo shows Brother Leo reading, but otherwise adheres to the traditional iconography [Fig. 9.2].<sup>23</sup> Meiss attempted to salvage the thesis that Bellini's *St. Francis* in the Frick collection represents a stigmatisation: '[Bellini] took the bold step of symbolizing a supernatural power in a stigmatization not by a seraph but by a partly natural, partly

<sup>17</sup> Carli E., *Sassetta et le maître de l'osservanza* (Milan: 1958), illust. 47, 54–84.

<sup>18</sup> "Paintings: French, Italian and Spanish" 203–209; Bailey C.B., *The Frick Collection* (New York, NY: 2011) 32–33 gives the title *St. Francis in the Desert*.

<sup>19</sup> Hecht C., *Die Glorie: Begriff, Thema, Bildelement in der europäischen Sakralkunst vom Mittelalter bis zum Ausgang des Barock* (Regensburg: 2003) 127–138.

<sup>20</sup> Clark K., *Landscape into Art* (2nd ed. London: 1950) 24.

<sup>21</sup> Meiss, *Giovanni Bellini's St Francis in the Frick Collection* 21.

<sup>22</sup> See Bätschmann O., *Giovanni Bellini* (London: 2008), illust. 97, 112.

<sup>23</sup> Eisler C., *The Genius of Jacopo Bellini: The Complete Paintings and Drawings* (New York, NY: 1989) 255–257, 292–293.



FIGURE 9.2 *Jacopo Bellini, Stigmatization of St. Francis (ca. 1430–1455). Brown ink on paper, 38 × 26 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre D.A.G. (inv. no. 83–001093/RF1533–81–folio65).*  
IMAGE © RMN-GRAND PALAIS (MUSÉE DU LOUVRE)/GÉRARD BLOT.

unnatural radiation in the sky'.<sup>24</sup> Despite the fact that both the radiance and three stigmata are missing, other scholars have attempted to support the thesis of a stigmatisation by assuming that the seraph was present in a now apparently lost upper section of the picture.<sup>25</sup> In 2007 Marilyn Aronberg Lavin put forward the following arguments against the interpretation as a stigmatisation:

- 1) Francis has only two of the canonical five wounds; 2) *Stigmatization* scenes almost never show St. Francis in a standing position; 3) there are representations of the stigmatization from which Francis's companion Brother Leo is absent; and 4) while many *stigmatizations* are set in a rocky surroundings, there are none in which the landscape is so prominent and so conspicuously filled with specific details of nature.<sup>26</sup>

In the large Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition of 1857 Bellini's painting was listed in the catalogue as No. 116 "St. Francis in the Desert" with a brief description: 'The saint stands in front of his cell in the attitude of receiving the stigmata'.<sup>27</sup> Following Millard Meiss's analysis of the painting, Bellini's *St. Francis* is given the new title "St. Francis in Ecstasy" in the catalogue of the Frick Collection published in 1968.<sup>28</sup> Among the publications that accepted the new title was the volume *Giovanni Bellini* in the series *Classici dell'Arte*, published by Rizzoli Editore in 1969: "San Francesco in estasi" ("Le Stimmate di San Francesco").<sup>29</sup> In her monograph on Giovanni Bellini first published in 1989, Rona Goffen retained the title given by the Frick Collection catalogue adding a puzzling remark: 'Whether or not the composition represents the stigmatization, Francis singing his hymn of the sun, or his blessing of Brother Leo, the question seems peripheral to the forceful characterization of the saint himself'.<sup>30</sup> Anchise Tempestini did not attempt to revise the Italian interpretation and in 2000 repeated the title "San Francesco in estasi"<sup>31</sup> for the Frick painting.

<sup>24</sup> Meiss, *Giovanni Bellini's St Francis in the Frick Collection* 31.

<sup>25</sup> See the report on the work's condition in: "Paintings: French, Italian and Spanish" 203–209.

<sup>26</sup> Aronberg Lavin, "The Joy of St. Francis" 233.

<sup>27</sup> Peck J., *Catalogue of the Art Treasures of the United Kingdom: Collected at Manchester in 1857* (Manchester: 1857), vol. 1, 21, available from: <https://archive.org/details/catalogueofarttrooartt> (accessed: 04.11.2016).

<sup>28</sup> "Paintings: French, Italian and Spanish" 203.

<sup>29</sup> Ghiotto R. – Pignatti T., *L'opera completa di Giovanni Bellini* (Milan: 1969), no. 98, 97.

<sup>30</sup> Goffen R., *Giovanni Bellini* (New Haven, CT – London: 1989) 108.

<sup>31</sup> Tempestini A., *Giovanni Bellini* (Milan: 2000) 83.

As long ago as 1966 Almon Richard Turner took up Clarke's suggestion that Bellini's *St. Francis* should be interpreted as a representation of the saint singing his hymn *Cantico delle creature*: 'Like the painting, it is a hymn of praise, addressed first of all to the sun. And like the painting, it celebrates even the smallest grasses and flowers of creation'.<sup>32</sup> Turner described the saint in Bellini's painting as follows: 'Francis stands with firmly planted feet, his head drawn back and chest swelled outward. His mouth is open, and his arms hang loosely, hands cupped in silent expressiveness'. He concluded: 'It would seem to me that this is the stance of a singer [...]'<sup>33</sup> In 1982 John V. Fleming, then professor of literature at Princeton University, wrote after having read Meiss's book: 'From the Franciscan texts with which I was familiar I could summon no immediate clue to the picture's narrative subject. Certainly it seemed to me, that subject was *not* the stigmatization'.<sup>34</sup> Fleming returned to the title "San Francesco nel deserto".<sup>35</sup>

The most recent publication on the subject, the excellent book edited by Susannah Rutherglen and Charlotte Hale and published by the Frick Collection New York, restored the title "St. Francis in the Desert". Rutherglen listed some eight different titles that have been given to Bellini's painting since Marcantonio Michiel.<sup>36</sup>

Numerous subsequent proposals have purported to identify a reference text for this scene from the wide-ranging literature on St. Francis.<sup>37</sup> Such endeavours overlook the fundamental question of whether or not this image can be traced back to textual sources at all, whether one or several. As a rule, iconographical analyses—especially of paintings of the Renaissance—do not pose this crucial question. The reason is that with few exceptions specific texts have traditionally been associated with particular religious and mythological subjects and their iconographic traditions. The textual tradition of St. Francis and his iconography are especially rich.<sup>38</sup> Is it conceivable that a painting such as *St. Francis in the Desert* was not produced on the basis of textual sources? Or could it be instead that texts played only a subsidiary role here, and that in

<sup>32</sup> Turner A.R., *The Vision of Landscape in Renaissance Italy* (Princeton, NJ: 1966) 65.

<sup>33</sup> Ibidem 63.

<sup>34</sup> Fleming J.V., *From Bonaventura to Bellini: An Essay in Franciscan Exegesis* (Princeton, NJ: 1982) 4.

<sup>35</sup> Ibidem 158–163.

<sup>36</sup> Rutherglen, "The Desert and the City" 24; Bätschmann, *Giovanni Bellini* 110–115.

<sup>37</sup> Johannes Grave, *Landschaften der Meditation: Giovanni Bellinis Assoziationsräume* (Freiburg im Breisgau: 2004) 29–42.

<sup>38</sup> Fleming, *From Bonaventura to Bellini*; Cook W.R., *Images of St. Francis of Assisi in Painting, Stone and Glass, from the Earliest Images to ca. 1320: A Catalogue* (Florence: 1999).

this instance the primacy of the text assumed by iconography was reversed by Bellini? Can we concede the possibility that Bellini composed his St. Francis on the basis of visual rather than textual precedents? What is the difference between Bellini's St. Francis and earlier representations of the saint? And what reasons might Bellini have had to neglect the tradition and to create a new scheme for the representation of St. Francis?

### Bellini's Invention

Never before Bellini had the saint been shown in the attitude that he strikes in the Frick painting. How can we define the pose of Francis that was created by Bellini? Marilyn Aronberg Levin described it as follows: 'In a moment of rapture St. Francis steps back and extends his arms low at his sides. With his hands turned forward, he shows tiny red marks of the Stigmata on each palm. Facing toward the left, he raises his eyes heavenward and opens his mouth; he is bareheaded and has no halo'.<sup>39</sup> Is he really stepping back or is he stepping forward while leaning backwards? A depiction of Francis in this pose was unprecedented: moving forwards with one foot in front and the arms slightly spread, the upper body arched backwards, the gaze directed upwards. This is a pose of reverence and pious surrender rather than of rapture or ecstasy. A similar pose—if not in all respects identical—is seen in Andrea Mantegna's *Man of Sorrows* in his *St. Luke* altarpiece, which was erected in Santa Giustina in Padua in 1454/55. Francis's attitude corresponds to that of the dead Christ in Michele Giambono's *Pietà* in New York, which dates from ca. 1430.<sup>40</sup> Christ, crowned with thorns, stands in a sarcophagus that is covered with a cloth, in front of the beams of the cross and against a gold ground. His arms fall downwards in front of the sarcophagus, the palms turned outward. The crown of thorns and the blood from the wounds are rendered in plaster in three dimensions and painted. Flowing from the stigmata are thin threads of blood that are drawn towards the small figure of Francis, who kneels behind the sarcophagus. This is an unusual depiction of the stigmatisation.<sup>41</sup>

Bellini shows St. Francis in the attitude of such an *Imago pietatis*, thereby pointing out the similarity between Christ and the saint, who is depicted elsewhere displaying the stigmata. Both the *Imago pietatis* and the figurative

39 Aronberg Lavin, "The Joy of St. Francis" 231.

40 See Bätschmann, *Giovanni Bellini*, illust. 99, 114.

41 Wolf G., *Schleier und Spiegel: Traditionen des Christusbildes und die Bildkonzepte der Renaissance* (Munich: 2002) 162–163.



FIGURE 9.3 *Valentin Lefebre after Titian Vecellio, Madonna of the Pesaro Family (1682). Engraving, 53.9 × 29 cm. London, British Museum (inv. no. Nn.7.30.1).*

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Practica musicae vtriusq; catus excellētis Frā  
chini gaffori laudēsis. Quattuor libris modula  
tissima: Sūmaq; diligētia nouissime ipresso.



FIGURE 9.4 *Anon. artist, "Singing Monks", in Franchino Gaffori, Practica Musicae (Venice, Agostino Zani: 1512). Woodcut, 2°. Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek (2 Mus. th 196).*

IMAGE © BAYERISCHE STAATSBIBLIOTHEK, MUNICH.

representations of the stigmatisation are confirmations of St. Francis's *imitatio Christi*—the imitation of Christ. Titian, who cites Bellini's St. Francis in his *Madonna of the Pesaro Family* [Fig. 9.3] painted in 1519–1526 for the Franciscan church of Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, has the saint assume the same pose in order to commend the family of Benedetto Pesaro to the infant Jesus.<sup>42</sup> Titian reinterpreted Francis's pose in the context of an act of intercession, a speech act directed at the Madonna and/or at Christ.

In an effort to interpret Francis's attitude, Jaynie Anderson cites a woodcut in Franchinus Gaffurius's *Practica musicae* of 1512, which contains a figure with slightly open arms among the singers [Fig. 9.4].<sup>43</sup> This image demonstrates that a pose similar to the one assumed by St. Francis could be used to depict someone who is singing. Since Bellini's St. Francis has his mouth slightly open, the suggestion that he is singing seems plausible, even if it is impossible to verify the claim that the song is the Canticle of the Sun.

Francis faces into the light of the sun, and Bellini depicts the presence of sunlight in this image: originating from a source located outside the picture on the upper left, the sunlight falls on a laurel tree that bends inwards into the picture, onto the town and fortress in the background, and onto the field with the herd of sheep in the middle ground, while also illuminating the cliffs that tower above one another. The light falls without interruption onto the figure of the saint, clad in the habit of his order, onto the lectern with its book, and onto the death's head, while also singling out the little pergola with its grapevines. The light falls in a similar way in all three versions of *St. Jerome in the Desert* [Fig. 9.5], the large version of which in Florence may have been executed during the same period as the Frick *St. Francis in the Desert*, between 1475 and 1480. The layout of both pictures—the piled-up and layered cliffs on the right, the open landscape, the town, the mountain surmounted by a castle—are closely related. But Jerome sits with his back to the light in a way that suitably illuminates the book he is reading, while St. Francis faces the light in a broad landscape.

In 2015 Susannah Rutherglen re-analysed the title given to Bellini's painting *San Francesco nel deserto* by Marcantonio Michiel in 1525. She interpreted 'deserto' not as an 'arid wasteland' but rather in the sense of 'a wilderness or deserted place located at the margins of civilization. From the early Christian period, holy men such as St. Jerome had retreated to such "deserts" in order

<sup>42</sup> WetHEY H., *The Paintings of Titian: Complete Edition*, 3 vols. (London: 1969–1975), vol. 1, no. 55, 101–103.

<sup>43</sup> ANDERSON J., *Giorgione peintre de la brièveté poétique: catalogue raisonné* (Paris: 1996) 158–159.



FIGURE 9.5 *Giovanni Bellini, St. Jerome in the Desert (ca. 1475–1480). Oil on wood, 151 × 113 cm. Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi (inv. no. C.B. 25).*  
IMAGE © AKG-IMAGES/RABATTI & DOMINGIE.

to live as hermits'.<sup>44</sup> Thanks to Marilyn Aronberg Lavin's work, it is clear that Michiel's name for the work had a connection with the island of San Francesco del Deserto, some six kilometres north-east of Venice near the island of Sant'Erasmo.<sup>45</sup> But it is not certain that this connection, suggested by the title Michiel gave to Bellini's painting, had existed for the painter, the patron, and the painting itself, despite the restoration of the neglected buildings from 1460 onwards and the fact that the subsequent popularity of the church was such that Pope Paul II changed its name to *S. Francisci de Stigmatibus*.<sup>46</sup>

The theme of the Frick painting is ascetic withdrawal in a deserted wasteland. With St. Francis and St. Jerome Bellini created images of saints in solitude, and their different behaviour in that solitude.<sup>47</sup> St. Jerome is shown meditating on the Bible, whereas St. Francis is depicted singing in the light of the sun in a state of spiritual elevation. St. Francis has left the Bible in his shelter and has gone barefoot into the light. In both paintings the solitude is indicated by the distance between the saints among the limestone cliffs in the foreground and the town with its castle in the background. Bellini emphasised St. Francis's solitude further by omitting his usual companion Brother Leo, who was with him in 1224 when he retired to Mount Alverna (or La Verna) north of Arezzo in the centre of the Tuscan Apennines to receive the stigmata. Bellini's *St. Francis in the Desert* is surrounded by animals, but the only other human being—the shepherd with his flock of sheep—is in the far distance. It is not impossible that the rocky surroundings are indeed an allusion to Mount Alverna.<sup>48</sup> This topographical identification could confirm that the subject of Bellini's painting was the saint's spiritual elevation in a place of solitude.

In his presentation of St. Francis, Bellini brought to the fore a variety of problems. One of these is the under-researched relationship between the optical and the acoustic, between light and sound, through which both the painting and the beholder are carried to the limits of art and of perception. The problem was discovered by Bellini in the *Pietà* in Milan and named in an inscription. From then on this question never left him. The other problem is the relationship between natural and transcendental light. This problem of conversion preoccupied Bellini subsequently in his *Transfiguration* and *Annunciation*. The third problem is the transcendence of the landscape, which

<sup>44</sup> Rutherglen, "The Desert and the City" 47–48.

<sup>45</sup> Aronberg Lavin, "The Joy of St. Francis"; Rutherglen "The Desert and the City" 48–49.

<sup>46</sup> Aronberg Lavin, "The Joy of St. Francis" 236–238.

<sup>47</sup> See the chapter "The Desert, Moses, Elijah" in Fleming, *From Bonaventura to Bellini* 32–74.

<sup>48</sup> Meiss, *Giovanni Bellini's St Francis in the Frick Collection* 22; Fleming, *From Bonaventura to Bellini* 32.

is raised insistently in *St. Francis in the Desert*. Plants, animals, the desert, the town, the castle: the objects contained in the picture are interwoven into a symbolic text about humility (the donkey), sinfulness (the grey heron), the Eucharist (the grapevines), redemption (the fig tree), the Lord's providence (the water that the bird drinks), and divine inspiration (the light), to the promise of the hereafter (in the form of the Heavenly Jerusalem). The view of the world offered by Bellini's singing St. Francis bathed in light is permeated by signs that have been understood as religious symbols distributed throughout the landscape.<sup>49</sup>

This interpretation of animals and plants as religious symbols is not undisputed. In 2006 David Allan Brown discussed the problem of a symbolic reading of Bellini's *St. Jerome* in the National Gallery in Washington, DC. Of the rabbits in this painting he writes: 'If practically identical rabbits appear in completely different contexts in three other works by Bellini, we must wonder whether any real hermeneutical significance can be attributed to compositional elements and motifs that can represent one thing or its opposite according to the context'.<sup>50</sup> Brown suggests that the animals and plants in the painting should be interpreted as 'attributes' of the landscape like the attributes of a saint. On the other side, discussing *St. Francis in the Desert* in 2004, Augusto Gentili insisted on the symbolic function:

Every single element has been predetermined in accordance with its symbolic function: The desert that imposes the ultimate test; the ass and heron of solitude; the radiant laurel, the shepherd with his flock, the rabbit in its burrow, the abandoned sandals, the spring issuing from the rock, all of which refer to Moses; the earthenware jug and the little garden, which refer rather to Elijah; the cave and the tabernacle-like cell, covered with eucharistic vines; the withered newly sprouting and newly grafted trees; the city of this world and that of heaven.<sup>51</sup>

I propose that we should consider the multiple functions of all parts of *St. Francis in the Desert* as we do in other paintings by Giovanni Bellini, and interpret them in relationship to the saint's state of spiritual elevation in the solitude of the desert heights.

49 See Fleming, *From Bonaventura to Bellini* 32–74.

50 Brown – Ferino-Pagden – Anderson, *Bellini, Giorgione, Titian and the Renaissance of Venetian Painting*, no. 22, 132–135.

51 Gentili A., "Bellini and Landscape", in Humfrey, *The Cambridge Companion to Giovanni Bellini* 167–181, esp. 173.

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# Landscapes and Visual Exegesis: Solitude in the Chapel of Fra Mariano Fetti in San Silvestro al Quirinale\*

Steffen Zierholz

At the time they were produced, Polidoro da Caravaggio's (ca. 1499–1543) frescoes on the side walls of the Chapel of Fra Mariano Fetti (1460–1531) in San Silvestro al Quirinale in Rome occupied an absolutely unique position.<sup>1</sup> Never before had the sacred space of a church been decorated with two monumental landscapes, much less ones that are now considered important forerunners of the classical landscape painting of the seventeenth century. Although recent

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<sup>1</sup> On the two landscapes, see Gnoli D., “La cappella di fra Mariano del Piombo in Roma”, *Archivio storico dell’arte* 4 (1891) 117–126; Turner R., “Two Landscapes in Renaissance Rome”, *The Art Bulletin* 43 (1961) 275–287; Ravelli L., “Gli affreschi di Polidoro Caldara da Caravaggio in San Silvestro al Quirinale, ovvero la nascita del paesaggio ideale”, *Atti dell’Ateneo di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti di Bergamo* 44 (1985) 337–366; Ravelli L., *Polidoro a San Silvestro al Quirinale*, Ateneo di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti: Atti/Supplemento 46 (Bergamo: 1987); Gnann A., “Polidoro da Caravaggio in S. Silvestro al Quirinale in Roma: Die Ausmalung der Kapelle Fra Mariano del Piombos”, *Arte lombarda* (1998/99) 134–139; Stollhans C., “Fra Mariano, Peruzzi and Polidoro da Caravaggio: A New Look at Religious Landscapes in Renaissance Rome”, *Sixteenth Century Journal* 23 (1992) 506–525. On Polidoro da Caravaggio in general, see Marabottini A., *Polidoro da Caravaggio*, 2 vols. (Rome: 1969); Gnann A., *Polidoro da Caravaggio (um 1499–1543): Die römischen Innendekorationen* (Munich: 1997); Castris P.L. de, *Polidoro da Caravaggio: L’opera completa* (Naples: 2001); on the history of the church of San Silvestro whose original structure has altered significantly in the nineteenth century due to the widening the Via xxiv Maggio, see Buchowiecki W., *Die Kirchen innerhalb der Mauern Roms: S. Maria della Neve bis S. Susanna*, Handbuch der Kirchen Roms: Der römische Sakralbau in Geschichte und Kunst von der altchristlichen Zeit bis zur Gegenwart, 4 vols. (Vienna: 1967–1997), vol. 3, 866–878; Iezzi E., *S. Silvestro al Quirinale: Via XXIV Maggio, n. 10* (Rome: 1975).

scholarship has explored the role of the Dominican Prior Fetti as an art patron, the question of why the landscapes were presented so prominently in the space of the church has yet to be adequately answered. As they also occupy a unique position within the artist's oeuvre, research has predominantly foregrounded Fetti's aesthetic interests, thereby declaring landscape to be the actual subject of the picture and reducing the religious scenes embedded in it to a legitimising pretext.<sup>2</sup> Taking as a point of departure the seminal studies by Reindert Falkenburg, Michel Weemans, and Arnold Witte, this essay understands landscape as a vehicle of religious meaning with which the sacred scenes are closely intertwined.<sup>3</sup> Appealing to Dominican writings, I aim to demonstrate that the decorative scheme of the chapel was indebted to the spirituality of the Order of Preachers. In this regard, the representation of landscape was inextricably bound with the idea of solitude and retreat.

The current appearance of the chapel can for the most part be traced back to the renovation and remodelling shortly after 1600, long after the Dominicans had left the convent.<sup>4</sup> What has survived from the original decoration is the monochrome band with the pairs of putti running along the chapel walls like a kind of pedestal, as well as the full-length, standing figures along the altar wall—St. Mary Magdalene with the ointment jar and St. Catherine of Siena with the white lily, respectively [Fig. 10.1]. Corresponding to the standing figures besides the altar, the landscapes on the sidewalls show scenes from the lives of the two female saints [Figs. 10.2 and 10.3]. Polidoro painted the frescoes between 1524, after the completion of extensive renovations, and 1527, when the artist fled the Sack of Rome never to return to the Eternal City again. The fact that the frescoes survived the remodelling of the church, and were additionally framed in marble, demonstrates the extent to which the artifice of Polidoro's works was valued. Giorgio Vasari (1511–1574) already wrote in his *Vite*:

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, Gnann, *Polidoro* 167.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Falkenburg R.L., *Joachim Patinir: Landscape as an Image of the Pilgrimage of Life*, Oculi: Studies in the Arts of the Low Countries 11 (Amsterdam – Philadelphia, PA: 1988); Weemans M., "Herri met de Bles's Sleeping Peddler: An Exegetical and Anthropomorphic Landscape", *The Art Bulletin* 88 (2006) 459–481; Witte A.A., *The Artful Hermitage: The Palazzetto Farnese as a Counter-Reformation "diaeta"* (Rome: 2008).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Gnann, *Polidoro* 168–170; Castris, *Polidoro* 212–247; Buchowiecki, *Handbuch*, vol. 3, 866.



FIGURE 10.1 Onorio Lunghi (architect), Chapel of Fra Mariano Fetti (1524–1527). Rome, San Silvestro al Quirinale.

IMAGE © BIBLIOTHECA HERTZIANA.

and in the church they painted his chapel, with two scenes in colour from the life of S. Mary Magdalene [sic!], in which the disposition of the landscapes is executed with supreme grace and judgment. For Polidoro, in truth, executed landscapes and groups of trees and rocks better than any other painter.<sup>5</sup>

5 Vasari, *Le vite*, vol. 5, 147: 'ed in chiesa gli dipinsero la sua cappella, e due storie colorite di Santa Maria Maddaena, nelle quali sono i macchiatii de'paesi fatti con somma grazia e



FIGURE 10.2 Polidoro da Caravaggio, *Landscape with Scenes from the Life of Mary Magdalene* (1524–1527). *Fresco and other technique, 205 × 170 cm. Rome, San Silvestro al Quirinale, Chapel of Fra Mariano Fetti.*  
IMAGE © BIBLIOTHECA HERTZIANA.

The chapel was commissioned by the Dominican Fra Mariano Fetti. In 1495, Fetti joined the Dominican convent of San Marco in Florence, which at this time was headed by Girolamo Savonarola (1452–1498) known for his uncompromising eagerness for religious reform.<sup>6</sup> It is not certain how or when Fetti

discrezione; perchè Polidoro veramente lavorò i paesi e macchie d'alberi e sassi meglio d'ogni pittore'. Cited after Vasari, *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, ed. G. du C. de Vere, 10 vols. (London: 1911–1914), vol. 5, 179.

6 Fra Mariano Fetti has remained an enigmatic figure. Historical sources paint an extremely ambivalent picture of his personality that oscillates between apostolic piety and a worldly *joie de vivre*, see Graf A., *Attraverso il Cinquecento* (Turin: 1888) 369–394; Taormina G., *Unfrate alla corte di Leone X* (Palermo: 1890); Rossi V., *Pasquinate di P. Aretino ed anonime per il conclave e l'elezione di Adriano VI* (Palermo – Turin: 1891); Gnoli D., *La Roma di Leone X* (Milan: 1938) 217–265; most recently, see Romei G., "Mariano Fetti", *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* 47 (Rome: 1997) 313–316, with further references.



FIGURE 10.3 Polidoro da Caravaggio, *Landscape with Scenes from the Life of Catherine of Siena* (1524–1527). *Fresco and other technique, 205 × 170 cm. Rome, San Silvestro al Quirinale, Chapel of Fra Mariano Fetti.*

IMAGE © BIBLIOTHECA HERTZIANA.

entered into the service of the Medici, but in any case, he wound up in Rome in the entourage of Cardinal Giovanni de Medici (1475–1521), later Pope Leo x. In 1507, he was placed at the head of the Dominican convent of San Silvestro al Quirinale, then on the outskirts of the city, which served as an urban hospice for the friars of San Marco who needed to come to Rome.<sup>7</sup> Upon the death of Donato Bramante (1444–1514), Fetti was given the office of the Keeper of the Papal Seals (*piombatore*), which came with a considerable annual income.<sup>8</sup> The discovery of two unknown versions of Fetti's will show his efforts to secure

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Assonitis A., "Art and Savonarolan Reform at San Silvestro a Monte Cavallo in Rome (1507–1540)", *Archivum fratrum praedicatorum* 73 (2003) 205–288, here 209–210.

<sup>8</sup> Fetti's nickname 'del Piombo' alluded to his office as *piombatore*. The comment was made in a letter to Francesco Gonzaga of 10 January 1519, printed in Luzio A., "Federico Gonzaga ostaggio alla corte di Giulio II", *Archivio della società romana di storia patria* 9 (1886) 509–582, here 551–553.

the maintenance of the chapel that was probably meant to serve as his burial place.<sup>9</sup> The proceeds from the sale of his estate were to be used for intercessions on the feast day of St. Catherine of Siena (1347–1380), to whom the chapel is dedicated.

### Poetics of Solitude: Catherine of Siena and Mary Magdalene

Catherine of Siena was a highly influential mystic of the Order and the author of numerous spiritual writings.<sup>10</sup> She died in 1380 in Rome and was buried in the Dominican church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva. In 1461, only half a century before the chapel was decorated, Pope Pius II (1458–1464) had canonised her. The most important source for her life is the *Legenda maior* composed between 1385 and 1395 by Catherine's Father Confessor Raymond of Capua (ca. 1330–1399). His biography had begun to circulate together with Catherine's writings shortly after her death, and at the time Polidoro was working in San Silvestro al Quirinale, both Da Capuas's biography and Catherine's writings were widely disseminated and certainly well known.<sup>11</sup>

In the *Legenda maior*, Raymond of Capua stresses the importance of Mary Magdalene as a role model for the Sienese saint. According to his report, Catherine experienced a vision in which Christ placed Magdalene at her side as her protector and teacher, who became an important point of reference: 'From that moment the virgin felt entirely at one with the Magdalene and always referred to her as her mother'.<sup>12</sup> Catherine's confessor sees the saint's

9 Cf. Sickel L., "Die Testamente des Fra Mariano Fetti", *Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken* 84 (2004) 497–508.

10 For more recent literature on Catherine of Siena, see Cavallini G., *Things Visible and Invisible: Images in the Spirituality of St. Catherine of Siena* (New York, NY: 1996); Muessig C. – Ferzoco G. – Kienzle B.M. (eds.), *A Companion to Catherine of Siena*, Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition 32 (Leiden – Boston, MA: 2012); Hamburger J.F. (ed.), *Catherine of Siena: The Creation of a Cult*, Medieval Women 13 (Turnhout: 2013).

11 As early as 1450, with the emergence of book printing, Catherine's works and Raymond's *vita* were so well known that they belonged to the earliest and most popular incunabula. Cf. Raymond of Capua, *33 Jahre für Christus: Die Legenda Maior. Das Leben der hl. Caterina von Siena*, ed. J. Schwarzbauer (Kleinhain: 2006) 7–8; the seminal study, with a critical review of the sources, is Fawtier R., *Sainte Catherine de Sienne: Essai de critique des sources*, 2 vols. (Paris: 1921–1930).

12 Raimondo da Capua, *Legenda maior* 252: 'ex illa hora virgo accepit Magdalenam in suam semperque matrem suam ipsam vocabat'. Cited after Raymond of Capua, *The Life of Catherine of Siena*, ed. G. Lamb (London: 1960) 168.

significance specifically in the parallels related to the contemplative life.<sup>13</sup> He states that since she had practised her self-renunciation without any examples in her ascetic exercises, Catherine had attained a higher level of perfection than the first desert fathers, Paul of Thebes or Anthony. However, the sole exception is Mary Magdalene who retreated for thirty-three years in the solitude of La Sainte-Baume:

As Mary Magdalene spent thirty-three years [...] in her cave in continual contemplation without taking any food, so [...] Catherine devoted herself with such fervour to the contemplation of the Most High that, feeling no need of food, she found nourishment for her mind with the abundance of graces she received.<sup>14</sup>

The juxtaposition of the two saints in the chapel points to a Dominican theme that had been widespread in the artistic patronage of the order since the Trecento.<sup>15</sup> For example, Fra Bartolomeo's altarpiece for the Dominican church of San Pietro Martire in Murano shows God the Father in his glory venerated by Mary Magdalene and Catherine of Siena [Fig. 10.4].<sup>16</sup> In regard to the Fetti chapel, Gnann had already pointed out the typological relation between the two saints, especially highlighting the role of contemplation and penitence in their spiritual lives.<sup>17</sup> By focusing on the notion of solitude as a necessary requirement for contemplation, I will try to shed new light on the meaning and function of the landscapes in the chapel's decoration.

The idea of solitude played a significant role in the lives of both Mary Magdalene and Catherine of Siena, even though in completely different ways. After leading an apostolic life in Southern France, Mary Magdalene 'retired to an empty wilderness, and lived unknown for thirty years in a place made ready

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Raymond of Capua, *Catherine of Siena* 55.

<sup>14</sup> Raimondo da Capua, *Legenda maior* 252–253: 'Sicut enim Maria Magdalena XXXIII annis steti in rupe absque coporeo cibo, contemplatione assidua [...] sic hec sacra virgo [...], tam ferventer contemplationi vacavit Altissimi, quod cibi corporals auxilio non egens, mentem reficiebat abundantia gratiarum'. Cited after Raymond of Capua, *Catherine of Siena* 168.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Jansen K.L., *The Making of the Magdalen: Preaching and Popular Devotion in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton, NJ: 2000) 92.

<sup>16</sup> Fra Mariano Fetti and his fellow Dominican Fra Bartolomeo (1472–1517) knew each other well. In 1513 Fra Bartolomeo, who was staying in San Silvestro al Quirinale at that time, was commissioned by Fetti with two panels of the apostle Peter and of Paul for his personal collection, cf. Stollhans, "Fra Mariano" 513.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Gnann, *Polidoro* 188–189.



FIGURE 10.4 *Fra Bartolomeo, God the Father with Mary Magdalen and Catherine of Siena (1508–1509). Oil on wood, 361 × 236 cm (inv. no. 88). Lucca, Museo Nazionale di Villa Guinigi.*

IMAGE © MINISTERO DEI BENI E DELLA ATTIVITÀ CULTURALI E DEL TURISMO.

by the hands of angels. There were no streams of water there, nor the comfort of grass or trees.<sup>18</sup> This form of solitude was very much desired by the young Catherine of Siena. In the *Legenda maior*, Raymond of Capua gives an account of this biographical detail, presumably a retrospective construction, with direct reference to the desert fathers:

Catherine, having [...] come to know by pure revelation the lives and deeds of the holy Fathers in Egypt, felt a strong inclination to imitate them. She confessed to me that when she was small she had felt a burning desire to become a solitary, but she had never found the way to do this. [...] Being unable to restrain her desire any longer, in fact, she decided one morning to go in search of solitude. With true childish forethought she armed herself with a loaf of bread, and went off on her own in the direction of her married sister's house near the St. Ansano gate. Having gone through the gate (a thing she had never done before), she went down a steep lane, and finding that there were no houses decided that she had come to the edge of the desert. She went on until at last she found a cave under a crag; this suited her, and into it she went delightedly, convinced that she had found at last the solitude of her dreams.<sup>19</sup>

The desert had been the preferred refuge of the early Christian anchorites from the third century on. In this form, it came into its own in Athanasius's

<sup>18</sup> Voragine Jacobus de, *Legenda aurea* xcii, 130–132 (1: 636): ‘Interea beata Maria Magdalena superne contemplationis auida asperrimam heremum petuit et in loco angelicis manibus preparato per xxx annos incognita mansit. In quo quidem loco nec aquarum fluenta nec arborum nec herbarum erant solatia’. Cited after Voragine Jacobus de, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, ed. W.G. Ryan, 2 vols. (Princeton, NJ: 1993), vol. 1, 380.

<sup>19</sup> Raimondo da Capua, *Legenda maior* 138–139: ‘Postremo, ut hinc finem capitulo imponamus, quia, prout superius dictum estm ex pura revelatione actus et vitam sanctorum patrum Egyptiorum didicerat, summe accendebatur ad ipsos totis viribus imitandum, unde, sicut ipsa michi confitendo narravit, in illa etatula nimis ardenter heremum concupivit; [...] Nam ex vehementia desiderii quodam mane, cogitans heremum querere, puerili providentia de univo sibi tantum pane providit vadensque sola versus domum sororis, que porte civitatis erat propinqua, ipsam portam que sancti Ansani dicitur, quod nusquam alias fecerat, est egressa indeque progrediens per cuiusdam descensus declivum, quia non adunatas ibi habitationes sicut in civitate videbat, putabat se iam esse derserto propinquam’. Cited after Raymond of Capua, *Catherine of Siena* 27–28; on the social relevance of female recluses, see Thurber A.C., ‘Female Urban Reclusion in Siena at the Time of Catherine of Siena’, in Muessig C. – Ferzoco G. – Kienzle B.M. (eds.), *A Companion to Catherine of Siena*, Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition 32 (Leiden – Boston, MA: 2012) 47–72.

(ca. 298–373) *Vita Antonii*, which represents virtually the sum of the ascetic desert teachings and would play a central role in the dissemination of the hermitic ideal in the Western world.<sup>20</sup> During the Middle Ages a different conception of the desert as an internal state increasingly gained importance. In this conception, the desert does not signify an actual flight from society anymore, but rather a spiritual retreat into one's own soul. Such spiritual exercises had already been practised in the philosophy of the Stoa. In the Late Middle Ages these ideas were mediated by the writings of Petrarch (1304–1374), the famous contemporary of Raymond of Capua and Catherine of Siena. In his *De vita solitaria*, he distinguished between the temporal solitude ('solitudo temporis'), the solitude of place ('solitudo loci') as well as the solitude of the mind ('solitudo animi').<sup>21</sup> But whereas Petrarch continuously gives precedence to the solitude of place, Da Capua's account of Catherine's desire for a solitary life emphasises the solitude of the mind: In contrast to Mary Magdalene, Catherine's striving for solitude was not successful at first. Angered by her religious piety, her mother took away her private room, and with it her spatial opportunity for prayer and unity with Christ. Additionally, she dismissed the serving girl and tasked her daughter with all the kitchen work so that she would have no more

20 On the desert as site of withdrawal, see Lindemann U., *Die Wüste: Terra incognita, Erlebnis, Symbol. Eine Genealogie der Wüstenvorstellungen in der Literatur von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart* (Heidelberg: 2000); Brunert M.-E., "Die Bedeutung der Wüste im Eremitentum", in Lindemann U. – Schmitz-Emans M. (eds.), *Was ist eine Wüste? Interdisziplinäre Annäherungen an einen interkulturellen Topos*, Saarbrücker Beiträge zur vergleichenden Literatur- und Kulturwissenschaft 12 (Würzburg: 2000) 59–69; Keller H.E., "Wüste: Kleiner Rundgang durch einen Topos der Askese", in Röcke W. – Weitbrecht J. – Möckel S. (eds.), *Gymnastik des Willens: Askese und Identität in Spätantike, Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, Transformationen der Antike 14 (Berlin – New York, NY: 2010) 191–207.

21 Cf. the contribution of Karl Enenkel in this volume. On the *retraite spirituelle* see Enenkel K.A.E., *Francesco Petrarca: De vita solitaria, Buch 1. Kritische Textausgabe und ideengeschichtlicher Kommentar* (Leiden et al.: 1990) 420–428. Such an interpretation is also encountered in Augustine's *Enarrations on the Psalms*. Since it is not possible to flee the society of one's brothers and fellow men, one must retreat into the inner desert of the soul: 'Lo, I fled far away, and stayed in the desert. What desert? Do you mean, perhaps, the inner place of your own soul, where no other human being gains entry, where no one is with you, where there is only yourself and God? [...] Lo, I fled away, and stayed in the desert. Perhaps the speaker sought refuge in his own soul, as I have suggested, and there found some measure of solitude where he could rest'. Augustine, *Expositions of the Psalms*, ed. and trans. M. Boulding – J.E. Rotelle, *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, 6 vols. (Hyde Park, NY: 2001), vol. 3(III/17), 63.

time for contemplation.<sup>22</sup> Denied the opportunity to go to a solitary place for prayer, Catherine was instructed by the Holy Spirit in how to cultivate inner solitude. She was taught how to construct an 'inner cell', into which she could retreat in solitude at any time, in the midst of all the work, the noise, and the people:

she began to build up in her mind a secret cell which she vowed she would never leave for anything in the world. She had begun by having a room in a house, which she could go out of and come into at will; now, having made herself an inner cell which no one could take away from her, she had no need ever to come out of it again.<sup>23</sup>

Solitude in the metaphorical sense of inner contemplation and spiritual retreat constitutes a central theme in Catherine's writings.<sup>24</sup> According to Catherine of Siena this form of solitude was particularly appropriate for an apostolic life. In a letter to Raymond of Capua, she illustrates the significance of inner solitude for the *vita apostolica*: 'You won't be able to have your actual cell very often, but I want you always to live within the cell of your heart and carry it about with us. For, as you know, as long as we are locked in there, our enemies cannot hurt us'.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Raymond of Capua, *Catherine of Siena* 42; Petrarch's *De vita solitaria* was highly influential in the late medieval monastic context, see Enenkel K.A.E., "Die monastische Petrarca-Rezeption: Zur Autorisierung über den Widmungsempfänger und zu anderen Bedingungen des Erfolgs von *De vita solitaria* in spätmittelalterlichen Klöstern", *Neulateinisches Jahrbuch* 14 (2012) 27–51.

<sup>23</sup> Raimondo da Capua, *Legenda maior* 150: 'Nam in nullo mota ex omnibus hiis cellam sibi secretam fecit Spiritu sancto dictante in propria mente, de qua statuit propter quodcumque negotium non exire. Sicque factum est ut que prius, dum exteriorem cellam habebat, quandoque stabat intus quandoque vero egrediebatur ad extra, nunc facta cella interiori, que sibi auferri non posset, numquam ipsam egredetur'. Cited after Raymond of Capua, *Catherine of Siena* 43.

<sup>24</sup> This concept would find a broad reception in the seventeenth century with Francis de Sales (1567–1622) who explicitly refers to Catherine of Siena. Francis de Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life: A Masterpiece of Mystical and Devotional Literature* (Mumbai: 2006) 100: 'When the father and mother of St Catherine of Siena deprived her of every opportunity of place and of leisure for prayer and meditation, our Lord inspired her to make a small interior oratory in her soul, and by retiring into it spiritually she was able in the midst of her exterior occupations to attend to this holy solitude of the heart'. See also the contribution by Agnès Guiderdoni in this volume.

<sup>25</sup> Letter to Raymond of Capua of 15 February 1380, Catherine of Siena, *The Letters of Catherine of Siena*, ed. S. Noffke, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 355 (Tempe, AZ: 2008) 368.

This brief outline indicates an evident tension between the different forms of solitude. Whereas Magdalene represents the *physical* retreat into the desert of La Sainte-Baume *after* leading a fruitful apostolic life, Catherine of Siena, conversely, stands for the *spiritual* retreat into the desert of one's soul as a necessary requirement *before* she was to be sent out to live an apostolic life. In the case of Mary Magdalene, the *vita contemplativa* follows the *vita activa* in a temporal sequence, whereas in the case of St. Catherine the active and the contemplative life occur simultaneously. Before analysing the ways in which Polidoro's landscapes mediate these different forms of solitude, the tensions between exterior and interior solitudes need to be explained within the context of the Dominican spirituality.

### Visual Exegesis: Solitude and Dominican Spirituality

In the case of Magdalene's *solitudo loci*, Polidoro followed the textual tradition and painted her in the solitude of the precipitous rocky wilderness of La Sainte-Baume [Fig. 10.2]. Polidoro assimilated the form of the mountain ridge to the actual appearance of La Sainte-Baume that he might have known from an engraving by Lucas van Leyden (1494–1533) in order to increase the authenticity of his representation.<sup>26</sup> Likewise, he situated Catherine's mystical marriage in the solitude of the inhospitable mountain [Fig. 10.3]. But while Mary Magdalene's penitence represents a pictorial rendering consistent with the textual source, according to Raymond of Capua, the mystical marriage of Catherine took place in her private chamber. This unusual depiction of the marriage in the wilderness needs explanation. However, traditional attempts to find a literary source that would explain this iconographical idiosyncrasy have not led to any results.<sup>27</sup> I thus suggest using an *exegetical* approach, as

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Turner, "Two Landscapes" 282.

<sup>27</sup> In this context, Diega Giunta understands Polidoro's depiction as a combination of two textual traditions. She has pointed to the report of the so-called Anonimo Fiorentino, according to which the mystical marriage took place in a grotto outside Siena. The report indeed emphasises the wilderness and isolation outside Siena ('dove pensò di fuori sono certe valicelle e grotte quasi nascoste dagli occhi delle genti'), but the problem remains that Polidoro did not depict the grotto in which the marriage took place. Giunta D., "La presenza di Santa Caterina da Siena in Roma: Cenni storico-iconografici", *L'urbe* 42 (1979) 9–20, here 17, n. 86. Furthermore, little is known about the reception of the report. Since the text has only survived in three hand-written copies, its influence is highly doubtful. Fiorentino's biography originated in 1375 and is considered to be independent of the *Legenda maior*. It is the only source to report of Catherine of Siena's being cited by the General Chapter of the Dominicans in Florence in 1374—an event that appeared

outlined by Paolo Berdini for Jacopo Bassano and Michel Weemans for Herri met de Bles. Berdini has convincingly argued 'that what the painter visualises is not the narrative of the text but its expanded form as it emerges from the painter's reading of it'.<sup>28</sup> Berdini thus considers painting as a form of visual exegesis. As scriptural exegesis deconstructs the literal narrative and transposes it into a spiritual meaning that directly affects the Christian 'form of life' (*forma vitae*), so visual exegesis indicates 'the trajectory from the literality of the text to the existence of the viewer'.<sup>29</sup> Polidoro likely developed the pictorial decoration of the chapel in collaboration with a Dominican advisor, maybe with the patron Fra Mariano Fetti himself. Therefore, we can assume that for a Dominican beholder who was perfectly familiar with both the *Legenda maior* and the *Legenda aurea* as well as with the principles of exegesis, the pictorial idiosyncrasy must have acted as a visual rupture and activated a 'hermeneutical dynamics' between him as 'the spectator and the image'.<sup>30</sup>

In accordance with the tradition of biblical exegesis, Thomas Aquinas distinguishes the historical or literal sense and the spiritual sense which itself is divided in an allegorical, moral, and anagogical sense.<sup>31</sup> For the Dominican friars, who were certainly familiar with such practice, the spatial juxtaposition of the two frescoes depicting two different forms of solitude must have triggered an exegetical dynamics. In her imitation of Mary Magdalene, Catherine of Siena translated the physical retreat into the desert into a spiritual retreat into one's soul, thus appropriating the idea of solitude for an apostolic form of living. Her self-fashioning toward the ideal of an apostolic life conforms to the spirituality of the Dominican order. Against the traditional division between an active and a contemplative life, the founder of the order, Dominic de Guzmán

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unfavourable for the efforts to canonise her. Cf. Jungmayr, *Legenda maior* xxxvii. Anonimo Fiorentino, *I miracoli di Caterina da Jacopo da Siena*, *Fontes vitae S. Catharinae senesis historici* 4, ed. M.H. Laurent – F. Valli (Siena: 1936) III.

<sup>28</sup> Berdini P., *The Religious Art of Jacopo Bassano: Painting as Visual Exegesis*, Cambridge Studies in New Art History and Criticism (Cambridge: 1997) xi; most recently on visual exegesis, see Melion W.S. – Clifton J. – Weemans M. (eds.), *Imago Exegetica: Visual Images as Exegetical Instruments 1400–1700*, Intersections: Interdisciplinary Studies in Early Modern Culture 33 (Leiden – Boston, MA: 2014); Linke A., *Typologie in der Frühen Neuzeit. Genese und Semantik heilsgeschichtlicher Bildprogramme von der Cappella Sistina (1480) bis San Giovanni in Laterano (1650)*, Reimer Bild und Bild 3 (Berlin: 2014); Telesko W., *In Bildern denken. Die Typologie in der bildenden Kunst der Vormoderne* (Vienna – Cologne – Weimar: 2016).

<sup>29</sup> Berdini, *The Religious Art of Jacopo Bassano* 14.

<sup>30</sup> Weemans, "Herri met de Bles's Sleeping Peddler" 465.

<sup>31</sup> Lubac H. de, *Medieval Exegesis: The Four Senses of Scripture*, trans. Sebanc M. and E.M. Macerowksi, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: 1998–2009); Bakker B., *Landscape and Religion from Van Eyck to Rembrandt*, trans. Webb D. (Farnham: 2010), esp. 19–41.

(ca. 1170–1221) propagated a lifestyle that embraced both contemplation and active pastoral work in the ideal of the *vita apostolica*.<sup>32</sup> This ideal found its best-known articulation in the writings of Thomas Aquinas (ca. 1225–1274), the most celebrated theologian of the order. According to Thomas, the *vita contemplativa* is superior to the life of (bodily, manual) action, but pastoral activity that arises out of the fullness of contemplation is more preferable, for it is better to pass on the fruits of contemplation than to simply contemplate.<sup>33</sup> Even though he does not condemn solitude *per se*, for him a life of solitude is appropriate only for those who have already reached spiritual perfection.<sup>34</sup> He asserts that a life within a religious community is more perfect for virtues like obedience and humility can only be practised by living together with others. His growing influence is reflected in the constitutions of the order in 1505—two years before Fra Mariano Fetti was appointed as head of the Convent of San Silvestro.<sup>35</sup> Thus, preaching and instructing has to proceed from the abundance and plenitude of contemplation.<sup>36</sup> As it is better to illuminate than to shine, so it is better to disseminate the fruits of contemplation than to merely contemplate.<sup>37</sup>

Considering these spiritual premises, the hermeneutical dynamics is also set in motion by the figure of a witness included in De Voragine's account: immediately after describing Mary Magdalene's ecstasies in La Sainte-Baume,

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32 The hierarchical understanding, and with it the prioritisation of the contemplative life was challenged by the mendicants. Even though this spiritual lifestyle is not exclusively Dominican, it marks a break with the monastic tradition of the Benedictines, the Carthusians, or the Cistercians who live a secluded life within the walls of the monastery. On the ideal of the *vita apostolica* among the mendicant orders, see Frank K.S., *Geschichte des christlichen Mönchtums* (Darmstadt: 2010) 86–108. On the spirituality of the Dominican order, see Regamey P., “Principles of Dominican Spirituality”, in Gauthier J. – Sullivan K. (eds.), *Some Schools of Catholic Spirituality* (New York, NY: 1959) 76–109; Clerissac H., *The Spirit of St. Dominic* (London: 1939); Hinnebusch W., *Dominican Spirituality: Principles and Practice* (Washington, DC: 1965); Lesnick D.R., *Preaching in Medieval Florence: The Social World of Franciscan and Dominican Spirituality* (Athens, GA: 1989).

33 Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae: Latin Text, English Translation, Introduction and Glossary*, ed. J. Aumann, 61 vols. (London – New York, NY: 1973), vol. 47, II–II, 188a6; Haas A.M., “Die Beurteilung der Vita contemplativa und activa in der Dominikanermystik des 14. Jahrhunderts”, in Vickers B. (ed.), *Arbeit, Musse, Meditation: Betrachtungen zur Vita activa und Vita contemplativa* (Zurich: 1985) 109–132.

34 Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, vol. 47, II–II, 188a8.

35 On the growing importance of Aquinas as a theological authority, cf. Hinnebusch W.A., *The Dominicans: A Short History* (New York, NY: 1975) 116.

36 Bandellus de Castronovo Vincentius, *Constitutiones Fratrum Ordinis Praedicatorum* (Milan, Giovanni Castiglione: 1505) 28v–28r.

37 Ibidem 28r.

De Voragine—he himself a Dominican—reports of a priest who had also retreated to the solitude of the mountains. There he saw the Magdalene in rapture and intended to find out more about the truth of these mysteries. But his efforts failed and he recognised ‘that there was a heavenly secret here to which human understanding alone could have no access’.<sup>38</sup> In De Voragine’s account, the priest represents a spiritual form of living which, unlike that of the Magdalene, is not (yet) perfected and therefore is not provided with contemplative insight into divine mysteries. Mary Magdalene’s withdrawal from the world is characterised as a unique gift granted by the grace of God. Its appropriateness as a Dominican *forma vivendi* was limited, since it stood contrary to the ideal of the *vita apostolica*. The priest represents a hermeneutical figure that reorients the gaze and transforms the literal narrative into spiritual meaning. The motif causes a ‘re-orientation by disorientation’, to use a phrase coined by Paul Ricoeur; in other words, the narrative twist reverses the reader’s expectation with the explicit aim to reorient him toward new ways of acting, seeing, and living.<sup>39</sup> In the spatial context of the chapel, it is Catherine of Siena who offered an alternative model for re-orientation.

### Landscape as Metaphor and the Two Spiritual Paths through Life

The compositions of the landscapes resemble each other closely. They consist of different natural sceneries in which episodes from the lives of the two female saints are embedded. In both landscapes, water forms an element that separates and mediates between the different pictorial levels. While in the landscape with the scenes of Mary Magdalene a small brook seems to flow out of the pictorial space and splashes down in multiple cascades, in the landscape with the scenes of Catherine of Siena it is a broad river running through the valley that creates an effect of spatial depth. Both frescoes include cityscapes and ancient ruins in the background which may be seen as a topographical reference to the Quirinal and Rome.<sup>40</sup> The landscape with the episodes from the life of the penitent saint contains four scenes. The foreground, enclosed by a blooming hedge, shows the Magdalene’s encounter with the resurrected Christ depicted as a gardener. In the peristyle on a rocky hillock behind is taking place

<sup>38</sup> Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea* xcii, 139 (1: 637): ‘Intellexit igitur uir dei illud procul dubio celeste esse sacramentum, ad quod accedere humanum non poterat experimentum’. Cited after Voragine, *Golden Legend*, vol. 1, 380.

<sup>39</sup> Ricoeur P., “Biblical Hermeneutics”, *Semeia* 4 (1975) 27–148, at 114.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Gnann, *Polidoro* 174.

the Feast in the House of Simon the Pharisee, which preceded the encounter in the garden. The fresco is damaged in this area, but Christ can still be recognised faintly, seated at the table as Mary Magdalene wets his feet with her tears, dries them with her hair, and anoints them with oil.<sup>41</sup> In the midground on the right side in the midst of a forest, a massive rock formation with a grotto rises up, where the Magdalene is kneeling and doing penitence before a crucifix. Along the central axis, her mystical elevation by four angels is shown against the background of a blue sky.

The landscape with the episodes from the life of Catherine of Siena contains just two scenes. The foreground on the right shows her mystical marriage on a mountaintop. Apart from its setting in the wilderness, Polidoro depicted the scene according to the *Legenda maior*. The apostle Paul, John the Evangelist, Dominic, the founder of the order, and the prophet David, with Christ and his mother appeared to her in a vision in which she received the wedding ring from the hands of the Christ Child. The wooded thicket and the richly foliated tree separate the mystical marriage compositionally from the scene on the left side. There, Catherine is shown accompanied by two sisters, kneeling before a classical architecture and exhorting Urban VI (ca. 1318–1389) and the College of Cardinals to be steadfast in the face of the widening schism of 1378.<sup>42</sup>

Polidoro uses the spatial juxtaposition of the two frescoes to establish an opposition which is further amplified by an antithetical imagery. The landscapes are both vertically divided into two geographically distinct zones [Figs. 10.2 and 10.3]. The right side of the frescoes shows high (bare) rock formations, forest, dense undergrowth, dried and dead branches. In contrast to this wilderness, classical and medieval architecture as well as cultivated nature mark the lower inhabited regions on the left side. I suggest that the two distinct regions and the embedded small-scale figural scenes represent the two spiritual forms of living—the active and the contemplative life. The scenes representing the contemplative life are situated entirely in the wilderness, while the scenes representing the active life are situated within an architectural frame and among people. The landscape thus functions here as a metaphor for the pilgrimage

<sup>41</sup> On the identification of the female sinner with Mary Magdalene, see Jansen, *Making of the Magdalen*, esp. 32–35.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Gnann, *Polidoro* 175; the Medici crest on the fascia should therefore be understood not just as an honouring of Fetti's patron, but in light of the spread of the Reformation and Leo X's excommunication of Luther (1483–1546), as a reference to the historical context. Such a reference has already been suggested by Giunta, “La presenza” 18; however, she interprets the event as an attempt to mediate peace between the pope and the Roman people, against which Gnann has cogently argued. See Gnann, *Polidoro* 175.

of life, and the contrast between wilderness and civilisation refers to symbolic qualities of the two different spiritual paths through life. Reindert Falkenburg has shown that such an understanding was crucial in the northern landscape tradition, especially in the works of Polidoro's contemporary Joachim Patinir (ca. 1480–1524).<sup>43</sup>

In accordance with the most essential task of Dominican *vita activa*, that is, preaching, Mary Magdalene's spiritual pilgrimage begins with her encounter with Christ in the garden [Fig. 10.2].<sup>44</sup> According to *John 20:12–18*, she went to Christ's grave and found it empty. Afterwards, she encountered Christ, but mistook him for a gardener until he called her name. He instructed her to go to the Apostles and announce his resurrection. Since the High Middle Ages, this privilege had been manifested in her honorary title, 'apostola apostolorum', which is also used by Jacobus de Voragine (ca. 1228–1298) in his influential *Golden Legend*.<sup>45</sup> The *Noli me tangere* scene in the foreground marks the beginning of the Magdalene's apostolic life, while her pilgrimage ends with the solitude of La Sainte-Baume. This arrangement corresponds to Thomas Aquinas's understanding of the solitary life as only appropriate for the already perfected. Polidoro proceeded differently in the landscape with scenes from the life of St. Catherine. As mentioned before, he placed further emphasis on the antithetical structure by reducing the episodes from four to two scenes [Fig. 10.3]. Additionally, he inverted the temporal sequence between the active

43 Cf. Falkenburg R., "Antithetical Iconography in Early Netherlandish Landscape Painting", in *Bruegel and Netherlandish Landscape Painting from the National Gallery Prague* (Tokyo: 1990) 25–36, here 26. On the motif of the pilgrimage of life, see most recently Stewart-Kroeker S., *Pilgrimage as Moral Aesthetic Formation in Augustine's Thought* (Oxford: 2017) and the important study by Ladner G.B. "Homo Viator: Medieval Ideas on Alienation and Order", *Speculum* 41 (1967) 233–259.

44 Pope Honorius III (ca. 1148–1227) who approved the order described the mission of the Friar Preachers, as they were officially known, as 'preaching the word of God and proclaiming the name of our Lord Jesus Christ throughout the world'. Cited in Hinnebusch, *Short History* 10.

45 For a discussion of the formulation *apostola apostolorum*, see Jansen, *Making of the Magdalen* 62–82. The relevant passage in the *Golden Legend* is as follows: 'She [that is Mary Magdalen] it was [...] who, when the disciples left the tomb, did not go away, to whom the risen Christ first appeared, making her an apostle to the apostles'. Cited from Voragine, *Golden Legend*, vol. 1, 376; see also Delcorno C., "La Legenda Aurea e la narrativa dei Predicatori", in Farris G. – Delfino B.T. (eds.), *Jacopo da Varagine: Atti del I Convengo di Studi* (Varazze: 1987) 27–49; see as well the contribution by Dominic E. Delarue in this volume. At the General Chapter of 1297, she was elevated as a patron saint to the Dominican Order, cf. Bonniwell W.R., *A History of the Dominican Liturgy 1245–1945* (New York, NY: 1945) 220.

and contemplative life. Catherine's spiritual pilgrimage starts from her mystical marriage in the foreground on the right and continues to the exhortation of Urban VI on the left. This conforms with Da Capua's *Legenda maior* where the mystical marriage marks the beginning of Catherine's apostolic mission and charitable work described in the second and third part of the book: 'she was to be called from rest to labour, from silence to noise, from seclusion of her cell to public life'.<sup>46</sup>

Even though there seems to be a similar (though reversed) chronological sequence between the contemplative and the active life as in the case of Magdalene, Polidoro also stresses the close connections between the *vita activa* and *contemplativa*: in the scenes of both the mystical marriage and the exhortation of Urban VI St. Catherine is represented with the same gesture, the outstretched right hand [Figs. 10.5 and 10.6]. By this means, the artist may have pointed to the Dominican ideal of the *vita mixta* according to which it is better to pass—what Catherine is literally doing—the fruits of contemplation than to merely contemplate.

The reversed sequence of scenes representing the active and contemplative life is further underlined by different viewing directions. In the case of Magdalene, the gaze of the beholder travels from the lower region in the foreground on the left to the high rock formation in the background on the right. This massive rock formation closes up the pictorial space and prevents the gaze from further wandering about. In the case of Catherine of Siena, the visual journey begins on the mountaintop in the foreground on the right where the mystical marriage takes place, travels to the exhortation of Urban VI in the midground, and continues toward the bridge that leads to another shore. Whereas Mary Magdalene's pilgrimage of life ends with the ecstasies she experienced in the solitude of La Sainte-Baume, Catherine of Sienas's inner solitude is a necessary prerequisite for an apostolic life in the world.

By using compositional antitheses and chiastic structures, which work as exegetical prompts, Polidoro draws attention to different models of solitude represented by the two saints.<sup>47</sup> His unusual rendering of the mystical marriage

46 Raimondo da Capua, *Legenda maior* 202: 'illa vero ex notitia vocis sui pastoris et sponsi ab ipso intelligens se vocatam de quietis dulcedine ad ad labores, de silencii solitudine ad clamores et de cubiculi secretis ad publicum [...]. Cited after Raymond of Capua, *Catherine of Siena* 106.

47 Fauser M., "Chiasmus", in Ueding G. (ed.), *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik* (Tübingen: 1992–2015), vol. 2, 171–173, see also Welch J.W., *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structures, Analysis, Exegesis* (Hildesheim: 1981); and most recently Pelkey J., *The Semiotics of X: Chiasmus, Cognition and Extreme Body Memory* (London: 2017).



FIGURE 10.5 Detail of Fig. 10.3: *Mystical marriage of Catherine of Siena*.

in an intimate and enclosed wilderness should be seen as a reference to a spiritualised form of *solitudo loci* and to the retreat into the solitude of the soul where the mystical marriage actually took place.

The bridge linking the two riverbanks—its imposing width is made evident by the small-scale human figures on foot and on horseback—underscores such a reading of landscape [Fig. 10.3]. Even though the motif of the bridge ('ponte') belongs to the most important metaphors in Catherine's writings, its meaning in the background of Polidoro's depiction has until now been overlooked. In her main work, the *Dialogue of the Divine Providence*, the passages concerning the bridge are, as Suzanne Noffke has emphasised, 'the central and most important part of the whole book'.<sup>48</sup> It is particularly significant that Catherine

48 Noffke S., "Introduction", in Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue*, ed. and trans. S. Noffke, The Classics of Western Spirituality (New York, NY – Ramsey, NJ – Toronto: 1980) 1–23, here 17.



FIGURE 10.6 Detail of Fig. 10.3: Catherine of Siena before Pope Urban VI.

uses the bridge as metaphor for the pilgrimage of life and spiritual ascent: 'So I gave you a bridge, my Son, so that you could cross over the river, the stormy sea of this darksome life, without being drowned'.<sup>49</sup> The wide stream stands for the wild, passionate, and dark side of human existence. The bridge, which brings the soul safely to the other side—that is, links together the earthly and the heavenly realms—was broken through Adam's original sin, but built anew through the life and death of Christ.<sup>50</sup>

49 Caterina da Siena, *Libro della divina dottrina volgarmente detto dialogo della divina provvidenza: Nuova edizione secondo un inedito codice senese*, ed. M. Fiorilli (Bari: 1912) 34: 'E però Io, volendo rimediare a tanti vostri mali, v'ho dato il ponte del mio Figliuolo, acciò che passando el fiume non annegaste. El quale fiume è il mare tempestoso di questa tembrosa vita'. Cited after Catherine of Siena, *Dialogue* 59.

50 Cf. Catherine of Siena, *Dialogue* 58.

By inserting pictorial elements such as ancient ruins, classical architecture, or the distinctive medieval *campanile* in the frescoes, Polidoro created specific topological references to the area around San Silvestro al Quirinale. This was completely in line with Fetti's interests, as the decoration of the convent garden can likewise be characterised as a forest wilderness. At about the time when Polidoro's work in the chapel began, Fetti commissioned Baldassare Peruzzi (1481–1536) to paint a monochromatic fresco of St. Bernard of Clairvaux (ca. 1090–1153) on the exterior wall of the church facing the garden.<sup>51</sup> This work, known only through an anonymous engraving, shows the founder of the Cistercian Order reading outdoors as a vision of Mary and the Christ Child appears to him [Fig. 10.7].<sup>52</sup> Unlike earlier representations, Peruzzi does not place the saint before a backdrop of a mountainscape but instead puts him in the middle of a forest, thus creating a visual continuity to the garden of the convent [Fig. 10.8]. In a letter to the Marchese of Mantua Fetti described the garden as a labyrinth with small woodlands and woodland decoration.<sup>53</sup> Peruzzi's fresco—maybe as an *argumentum a nomine*—marked the garden of San Silvestro as a woodland desert.<sup>54</sup> This coincides with the topographical significance of the Quirinal. Throughout the entire Middle Ages, the population of Rome was concentrated in the low-lying Tiber Bend. The Quirinal Hill, in contrast, was considered to be *disabitato*—lonesome and empty of people. It was not until the urban expansion at the start of the Cinquecento that it advanced to the preferred site of Roman *villeggiatura*.<sup>55</sup> All important Roman personalities owned villas and vineyards on the hill and made the Quirinal into a place of retreat from the noisy, restless, and unhealthy city. As older maps of Rome demonstrate, the Convent of San Silvestro had three hanging gardens that must have offered a magnificent view of Rome and its ancient ruins

51 Cf. Frommel C.L., *Baldassare Peruzzi als Maler und Zeichner*, Römisches Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte 11 (Vienna: 1968) 129–130.

52 The motif can be explained with reference to Fetti's position as *piombatore* which was traditionally occupied by the Cistercians. However, he had been freed from all obligations toward the Cistercian Order by a Papal bull. Cf. Gnann, *Polidoro* 185.

53 I cite after Graf, *Attraverso* 312: 'all'orto que di Monte Cavalli nel laberinto dove vedresti boschetti ed ornamenti silvestri nel domestico cento, 100 varietà e 1000 capricci'. The passage is translated in Stollhans, "Fra Mariano" 522.

54 Jacques LeGoff has demonstrated that the forest had begun to be equated with the desert starting with the Middle Ages, see LeGoff J., "Die Waldwüste im mittelalterlichen Abendland", in LeGoff J. (ed.), *Phantasie und Realität des Mittelalters* (Stuttgart: 1990) 81–97.

55 Cf. Coffin D.R., *The Villa in the Life of Renaissance Rome*, Princeton Monographs in Art and Archeology 34 (Princeton, NJ: 1979) 181–214, esp. 181.



FIGURE 10.7 Anon. engraver after Baldassare Peruzzi, *The Vision of St. Bernard of Clairvaux* (ca. 1550). Engraving, 20 x 13.6 cm. Rome, Istituto Centrale per la Grafica di Roma (inv. no. FC 31573).  
IMAGE © MINISTERO DEI BENI E DELLA ATTIVITÀ CULTURALI E DEL TURISMO.



FIGURE 10.8 *Fra Bartolomeo, The Vision of Bernard of Clairvaux (1504–1507). Oil on wood, 215 × 231 cm. Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi (inv. no. 3122).*  
IMAGE © MINISTERO DEI BENI E DELLA ATTIVITÀ CULTURALI E DEL TURISMO.

[Fig. 10.9]. These gardens served, as Franciso de Holanda (1517–1585) reports in his so-called *Dialogues in Rome*, as a setting for the conversations on religious and artistic issues between Michelangelo (1475–1564), Vittoria Colonna (1492–1547), and Lattanzio Tolomei (d. 1543) under the supervision of the Dominican friar Ambrogio Caterino Politi (1484–1553), giving evidence of the increasing importance of solitude as a cultural technology.<sup>56</sup>

56 Cf. Deswart-Rosa S. "Vittoria Colonna und Michelangelo in San Silvestro al Quirinale in den Gesprächen des Franciso de Holanda", in Ferino Pagden S. – Attanasio A. (eds.), *Vittoria Colonna: Dichterin und Muse Michelangelos* (Milan: 1997) 349–373, here 353–354;

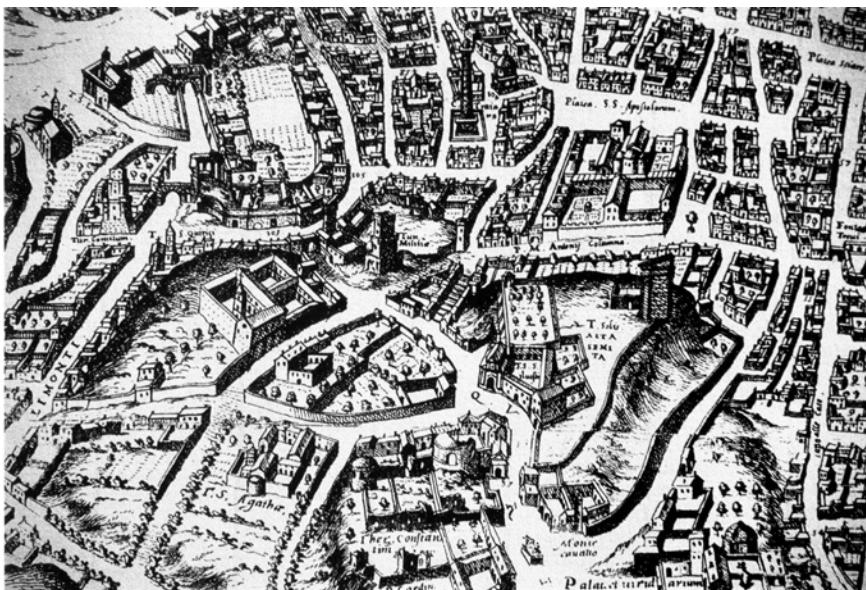


FIGURE 10.9 *Etienne Dupérac, Nova Urbis Romae Descriptio* (1577). Etching and Engraving, 79.4 × 100.7 cm. London, British Library (\*23805(8)). Detail with the gardens of San Silvestro al Quirinale.

IMAGE © BRITISH LIBRARY, LONDON.

## Conclusion

In this essay I have attempted to show that Polidoro da Caravaggio's landscapes with scenes from the lives of Mary Magdalene and Catherine of Siena in the Chapel of Fra Mariano Fetti are not only indebted to the aesthetic interests of the patron, but are also linked with the spirituality of the Dominican order. They point to various forms of solitude which shaped the lives of both holy women in decisive ways. While Mary Magdalene led a life of penitence on a remote mountain ridge after a life of apostolic activity, Catherine of Siena created an 'inner cell', into which she could retreat at any time, gaining strength to pursue active pastoral work. The juxtaposition of the two landscapes as well

Macho Th., "Mit sich allein. Einsamkeit als Kulturtechnik", in Assmann A. – Assmann J. (eds.), *Einsamkeit. Archäologie der literarischen Kommunikation* 6 (Munich: 2000) 27–44. For the importance of solitude in a courtly context, see the recent study by Göttler C., "The Art of Solitude: Environments of Prayer at the Bavarian Court of Wilhelm V.", *Art History* 40 (2017) 404–429.

as their antithetical structure of composition and iconography express the two spiritual paths of a religious life. The landscapes then are to be understood as metaphorical images of the pilgrimage of life. By using a visual chiastic structure, Polidoro engages the (Dominican) viewer to exegetically transform the landscape from a literal narrative to a spiritual meaning. In this trajectory, he had to discern the right spiritual path in conformity with the Dominican ideal of the *vita apostolica*.

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## Alone at the Summit: Solitude and the Ascetic Imagination at the Sacro Monte of Varallo

*Carla Benzan*

Knowledge of the divine requires that vision be tested. At the Sacro Monte of Varallo Christ's miraculous transformation from incarnate flesh to immaterial light takes place high above the pilgrim who kneels at a wooden viewing screen [Fig. 11.1]. The screen frames and controls the revelation at the same time as it withholds its image from the viewer. This difficulty is augmented by an enormous representation of Mount Tabor that confronts the visitor from behind the screen. Christ is presented at the highest point of the stucco mountainside on the upper rear wall of the vast chapel interior: rather than facilitating access to divine presence, Mount Tabor complicates visual apprehension of the miracle and even undermines efforts to verify its proof [Fig. 11.2]. Traditional associations of the mountain as a liminal place between heaven and earth are emphasised in the *Transfiguration* at Varallo while, paradoxically, contact and communion with the divine are made increasingly difficult. In fact, Christ's retreat from vision in the *Transfiguration* only serves to heighten the sense of withdrawal already raised by the narrative recounted in the Synoptic Gospels.<sup>1</sup> The transfiguration begins when Christ takes Peter, John, and James up a mountain to pray. Departing from the crowds and followers that accompany him during his ministry, Christ's relative solitude is a seeming precondition for divine revelation. Yet the slumber of the three disciples signals a concomitant oscillation between separation and witness that is reinforced by the uncertain presence of Moses and Elijah, including their abandonment of

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<sup>1</sup> If not otherwise indicated all translations are my own. *Matthew* 17:1–9; *Mark* 9:2–9; *Luke* 9:28–36. My analysis is indebted to a recent discussion of visibility and epistemology put forth by Pierre Antoine Fabre: Fabre P.A., “Sleep of the Flesh: The Agony of the Visible at the Limits of the Frame in the Iconography of the Prayer of Christ in the Garden of Gesthemane”, in Falkenberg R.L. – Melion W.S. – Richardson T.M. (eds.), *Image and Imagination of the Religious Self in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Turnhout: 2007) 163–194. This interpretation departs from scholarship that emphasises the full revelation of truth and knowledge. See for example Cranston J., “Tropes of Revelation in Raphael’s *Transfiguration*”, *Renaissance Quarterly* 56, 1 (2003) 1–25.



FIGURE 11.1 Pietro Francesco Petera, Giovanni Soldo of Camasco, Dionigi Bussola (sculptures) and Montaldo Brothers 'Danedi' (frescoes), Transfiguration Chapel (ca. 1572–1675). Polychromed sculpture and other media. Varallo, Sacro Monte. Detail of lower half of chapel without the viewing screen.

IMAGE © RISERVA NATURALE SPECIALE DEL SACRO MONTE DI VARALLO.

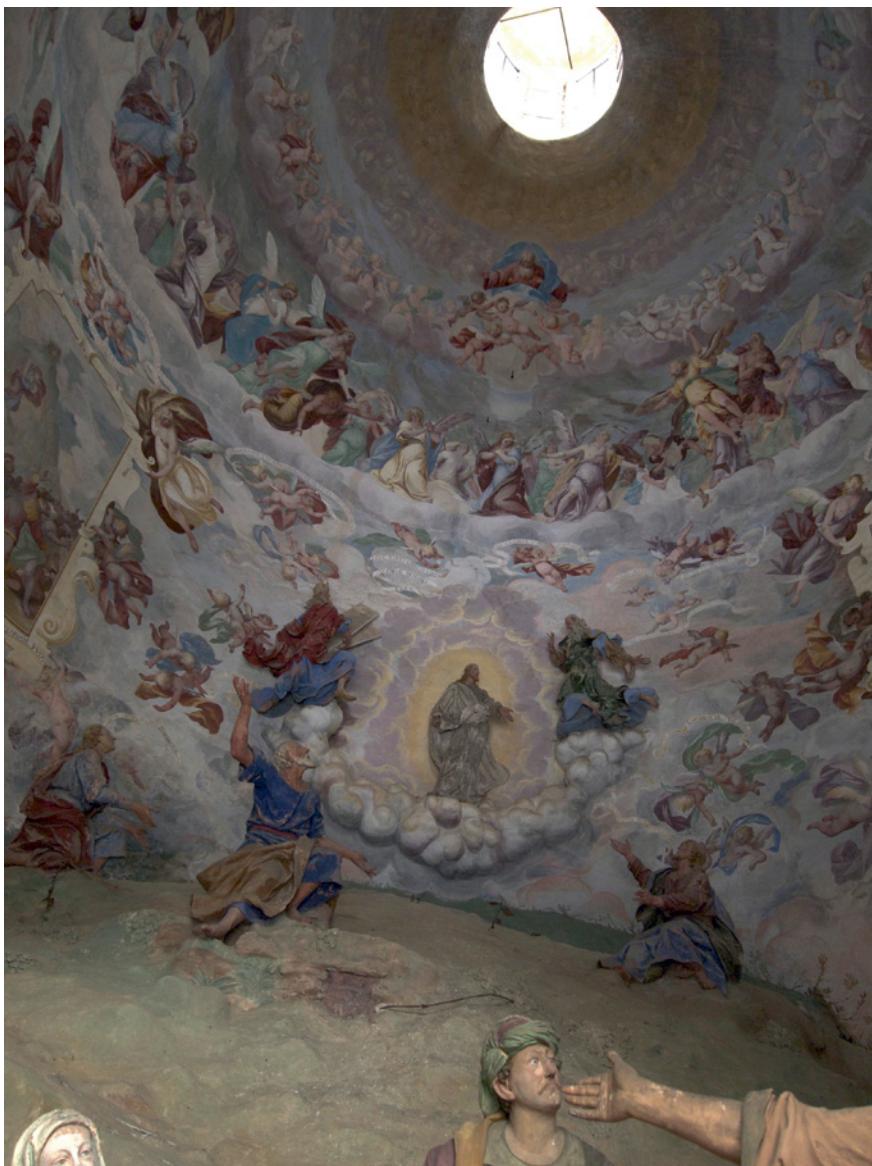


FIGURE 11.2 *Pietro Francesco Petera, Giovanni Soldo of Camasco, Dionigi Bussola (sculptures) and Montaldo Brothers 'Danedi' (frescoes), Transfiguration Chapel (ca. 1572–1675). Polychromed sculpture and other media. Varallo, Sacro Monte. Detail of upper half of chapel without the viewing screen.*

IMAGE © RISERVA NATURALE SPECIALE DEL SACRO MONTE DI VARALLO.

Christ to his earthly fate following God's aural verification of his son. Finally, before their descent to the earthly realm Christ commands the disciples not to discuss what they beheld. An uncertain truth must be held within each witness alone.

Ascending from the wooded valley where Christ's life and ministry are represented, the pilgrim approaches the *Transfiguration* by way of a steep path and set of stairs to the highest hillock of the entire complex [Fig. 11.3]. This bodily act is compounded by the visual ascent demanded by the enormous scale of the stucco mountain inside. In this way the *Transfiguration* demands a performative and imaginative re-enactment of the narrative on the part of the pilgrim for whom the vertical axis along which they seek knowledge is interrupted by the screen. Body and mind, earthly and divine are interwoven here. Neither perfect solitude nor solidarity is made possible by Varallo's Mount Tabor, where a number of sculptural groups in the foreground of the chapel confront the visitor with the crowd's Christ left behind. At the base of the mountain, the possessed boy is depicted falling down when a disciple fails to heal him; apostles preach and gesture toward the Law; contemporary pilgrims look out towards the viewer [Figs. 11.4 and 11.5]. None of these figures—figures that are most immediately visible to the viewer and which mediate their access to the rest of the chapel—are aware of what is taking place above. In this way Christ's body is spatially distanced from the viewer by the mountain, while the very idea of solitude is tested by the literal foregrounding of more communal procedures of doubt and belief from which Christ had retreated.

The *Transfiguration* at Varallo draws attention to the unreliability of vision in order to mobilise a more self-reflexive, imaginative experience. This essay investigates the limits of solitude solicited by the representation of Mount Tabor and argues that pilgrimage is fundamentally transformed, and perhaps even challenged, by the representation of the sacred summit. In the context of the problematic status of images and pilgrimage after the Reformation—both of which were under immense ecclesiastical scrutiny in northern Italy at this time—the Sacro Monte offers an intriguing site of experimentation. As we will see, solitude became an increasingly important principle during the last quarter of the sixteenth century under the direction of the bishop of Novara, Carlo Bascapè (1550–1615), who insisted that the Sacro Monte was a place of solitary contemplation. Solitude would have been a particularly fraught endeavour at Varallo, which increasingly fostered a close communion between pilgrim and image in the seventeenth century. With this in mind I argue that the growing desire for solitude at the Sacro Monte of Varallo belies a deeper concern towards not only communal pilgrimage, but the concomitant uncertainty of



FIGURE 11.3 *Galeazzo Alessi (designer), Exterior of the Transfiguration Chapel (ca. 1572–1664). Varallo, Sacro Monte.*

IMAGE © RISERVA NATURALE SPECIALE DEL SACRO MONTE DI VARALLO.



FIGURE 11.4 Detail of Fig. n.1: Left side of the Transfiguration Chapel.

vision and the imagination inherent to new modes of individual devotion to images.

### The Sacro Monte as a Place of Solitude

The Sacro Monte of Varallo was founded in 1486 by the Franciscan Fra Bernardino Caimi (ca. 1425–1500) following his return to Italy after a period spent as custodian of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. On a rocky bluff in the Sesia river valley, Caimi's architectural chapels replicated the sacred shrines of the Holy Land, which were arranged to mimic precisely the topography of key pilgrimage sites. Carefully positioned as a scaled-down version of the actual sacred geography, this “topomimetic” site—literally a *replica of a place*—demanded bodily navigation to activate the surrogate space. Following its initial construction, the Sacro Monte was transformed during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Eventually the pilgrimage site would include roughly forty-five large chapels depicting Christological narratives in strikingly illusionistic multi-media *mise-en-scènes*. After this time the pilgrimage site



FIGURE 11.5     *Detail of Fig. 11.1: Right side of the Transfiguration Chapel.*

offered a narrative *percorso* of Christ's life and death, denying much of the spatial and embodied experience instituted under Fra Caimi. Foregrounding the experience of visual images in this way, the Sacro Monte dramatically altered the experience of pilgrimage in a period of Catholic reform.

Even while the image came to dominate the Sacro Monte, earlier forms of replication remained and would continue to provide a moving experience. The subtitle of Francesco Sesalli's *Descrittione del Sacro Monte di Varale di Val'Sesia* draws the reader's attention to this conjunction of resemblance and representation: 'Where, like in a New Jerusalem, there is a Sepulchre similar to the one of Christ, with many places like it in imitation of those in the Holy Land, with marvellous statues and paintings'.<sup>2</sup> This hybrid proposition is unique to Varallo and posed a problematic and complex experience for the pilgrim. The preface to a 1613 edition of an earlier guidebook explicitly foregrounds this epistemological challenge:

All men, the Philosopher says, naturally seek knowledge, and even more so when they are given external objects that excite their intellect. The devotees who visit the Sacro Monte of Varallo experience this while looking at the mysteries of its making, providing their first taste of what is shown to them, of knowledge, which is truth, and what they represent.<sup>3</sup>

Seeking new possibilities for pilgrimage and images, the chapels at Varallo could not guarantee the pilgrim access to the literal presence of the divine through a holy relic, icon, or miraculous image. Rather, images confronted visitors with ever more visual representations of the mysteries. The centrality of illusionistic images at the Sacro Monte after 1570 compounded anxieties towards pilgrimage and it is during this time that patrons attempted to control both visual and embodied experience by advocating for a more individual focus.

Clearly the shift to solitude that I am tracing here cannot be separated from anxieties towards pilgrimage in the post-Tridentine period. Condemned by reformers as idolatrous and superstitious, leading to the worship of false objects and images and licentious and profane activities, pilgrimage was the subject

<sup>2</sup> Sesalli Francesco, *Descrittione del Sacro Monte di Varale di Val'Sesia* (Varallo, Pietro and Anselmo Ravelli: 1589) 1: 'Dove, come in una nova Gierusalem, è il sepolcro simile a quello di N.S. Giesu Christo, con infiniti luoghi pii, ad imitation di quelli di Terra Santa, con statue e pitture maravigliose'.

<sup>3</sup> Ferrari Giovanni Giacomo, *Brevi Considerationi sopra i Misteri del Sacro Monte di Varallo* (Varallo, Pietro Revelli: 1613) n.p.: 'Ogni huomo, dici il filosofo, naturalmente decidera di sapere, e tanto piu quando da esteriori oggetti e cio eccitato l'intelletto suo. Esperimentano questo ancora quei divoti, che visitano il Sacro Monte di Varallo, mentre mirando i misteri, che in esso si veggono fabricati, provano, che il primo appetito, che da essi vien loro mostro, e di sapere, che cosa siano in verita, e che effetti rappresentino'.

of much debate.<sup>4</sup> The extra-liturgical and collective aspect of pilgrimage was central to these concerns, offering as it did the possibility for new social formations outside the bonds and controls of social order. Rather than take up a particular position in anthropological debates about the unity or contestation made possible through *communitas* I shift attention to the productive responses to this threat. Rather than merely reaffirm previous models of pilgrimage, Catholic reform in the late sixteenth century initiated experiments that would transform the experiences solicited from individual pilgrims. Certainly late medieval practices of virtual pilgrimage suggest continuity with the past, as opposed to clear rupture. The dramatic increase in printed guidebooks to Varallo would have revived this tradition to a certain extent. However, following Laura Gelfand, I seek to blur the distinction between active and virtual pilgrimage by emphasising the jointly performative and imaginative labour of pilgrimage that physically and emotionally engages the subject in an active mode of inner transformation.<sup>5</sup>

In response to Protestant reform, Catholic authorities struggled to discipline the unruly movements of the body through new practices that sought to re-direct the faithful through carefully orchestrated spaces and practices.<sup>6</sup> Efforts at reform were particularly intense in northern Italy under the archbishops of Milan and Bologna, Charles Borromeo (1538–1584) and Gabriele Paleotti (1522–1597).<sup>7</sup> Both sought to legislate popular theatre, festivals, plays, and pilgrimage as more mobile, popular religious dramas were replaced by organised procession during the Lenten season. Pilgrimage was made increasingly linear as well through Borromeo's institution of a fixed itinerary of seven pilgrimage churches in Milan. Concerns regarding pilgrimage were specifically

4 Eire C.M.N., *War Against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin* (Cambridge: 1986) 43–45.

5 Gelfand L., "Illusionism and Interactivity: Medieval Installation Art, Architecture, and Devotional Response", in Blick S. – Gelfand L.D. (eds.), *Push Me Pull You: Imaginative, Emotional, Physical, and Spatial Interaction in Late Medieval and Renaissance Art* (Leiden: 2011) 88.

6 Lavin M., "Legacies of the Counter Reformation and the Origins of Modern Catholicism", in Bamji A. – Janssen G.H. (eds.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to the Counter-Reformation* (Farnham – Burlington, VT: 2013) 452–453.

7 Bernardi C., "Il tempo profano: l'Annual Ricreazione. Il carnevale ambrosiano nel seicento", in Cascetta A. – Carpani R. (eds.), *La Scena della Gloria: Drammaturgia e Spettacolo a Milano in età Spagnola* (Milan: 1995) 545–583; Burke P., *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London: 1979) 305–306; Cascetta A., "La Scena Della Gloria: Il teatro a Milano nell'età borromaea", in Biscottini P. (ed.), *Carlo e Federico: la luce dei Borromeo nella Milano Spagnola* (Milan: 2005) 101–108.

addressed by Borromeo in a Provincial Council "On Religious Pilgrimage" held in Milan in 1576 by enforcing adherence to strict itineraries, legislating the use of representation and images, and forbidding inappropriate behaviour.<sup>8</sup> These decrees suggest, in fact, that images could be powerful agents in the regulation and control of pilgrimage when properly legislated. Moreover, the control of body was intimately connected to the control of the mind.<sup>9</sup>

Even if these sixteenth-century reforms could never fully control the experience of pilgrimage, the decrees would become influential at the Sacro Monte in the seventeenth century. Charles Borromeo had made several well-known pilgrimages to the site in the 1570s and 1580s, during which the devout archbishop undertook prolonged nocturnal meditation at the chapels practising the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola.<sup>10</sup> Borromeo also arbitrated disputes regarding the future of the site that were emerging at this time. Disagreements were prompted in part by an extensive reorganisation programme proposed by architect Galeazzo Alessi (1512–1572) in a manuscript called the *Libro dei Misteri*, produced between 1565 and 1569 and commissioned by a local *fabbriciere* Giacomo d'Adda (d. 1580). The *fabbricieri* were elite noblemen elected to oversee the maintenance of the site, but d'Adda's and Alessi's more narrative aims for the Sacro Monte clashed with the Franciscan custodians who favoured the principle of spatial replication enacted by its Franciscan founder. A generation after Alessi's *Libro* was produced, Borromeo's former secretary and biographer, Carlo Bascapè, was given administrative control at the Sacro Monte through a papal bull and appointed bishop of Novara (1593–1615). Like Borromeo before him, Bascapè was called upon to ease conflict between the Franciscan monks and the *fabbricieri*. Unlike Borromeo, however, Bascapè actively initiated and oversaw renovation and reorganisation projects that were frequently based on Borromeo's and Alessi's earlier suggestions.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> These decrees are found in a chapter titled "De religiosis peregrinationibus". See Longo P.G., "Il Monte e l'Itinerario nel Sacro: Prospettive di storia religiosa del Sacro Monte di Varallo nei secoli XVI–XVIII", in Pellizzari P. (ed.), *1º Convegno Internazionale sui Sacri Monti* (Quarona: 2009) 65.

<sup>9</sup> Boer W. de, *The Conquest of the Soul: Confessions, Discipline, and Public Order in Counter-Reformation Milan* (Cologne: 2001).

<sup>10</sup> Stoppa A.L., "I quattro pellegrinaggi di San Carlo al Sacro Monte di Varallo", in *Da Carlo Borromeo a Carlo Bascapè: la pastorale di Carlo Borromeo e il Sacro Monte di Arona* (Novara: 1985) 57–83.

<sup>11</sup> Gentile G., "Gli interventi di Carlo Bascapè nella regia del Sacro Monte di Varallo", in *Carlo Bascapè sulle orme del Borromeo: coscienza e azione pastorale in un vescovo di fine Cinquecento* (Novara: 1994) 429–430.

Under Bascapè's direction the Sacro Monte was more fully transformed from a topomimetic site to a more complex place of images that would prioritise the individual experience of the pilgrim. In letters written to the *fabbricieri*, Bascapè repeatedly and insistently referred to the Sacro Monte as a 'sacred place' and a 'place of solitude and of contemplation'.<sup>12</sup> Bascapè's attempts to circumscribe exactly what kind of 'sacred place' one would find at Varallo were accompanied by his concern with what kinds of activities would be pursued by its visitors. His letters and other correspondence express concern toward the lack of devotion on the part of visitors, the incorrect ordering of chapels, and the potential confusion of the dogma and biblical teaching of the Gospels.<sup>13</sup> The control of inner vision and individual experience was cause for concern at Varallo, as Carlo Bascapè's changes suggest.<sup>14</sup> Pilgrimage requires self-control perhaps even more when its labour is imaginative; attempts to deploy and regulate more interior forms of devotion could not eliminate anxieties toward pilgrimage, but shifted the concern from the body to the mind.<sup>15</sup> Interiorised practices of devotion and pilgrimage could be directed toward images—whether in the Spiritual Exercises or at the Sacro Monte—in an attempt to fix and contain the imagination.<sup>16</sup>

To this end, Bascapè initiated extensive renovations in pursuit of a growing concern toward the devotional focus of the individual visitor. Galeazzo Alessi's project for a separate upper urban zone was loosely adopted and a series of large architectural commissions were initiated around 1600. These included the Square of Tribunals, which brought together the chapels of Christ's trials in a single piazza, and Pilate's Palace where the pilgrim would witness the torture and final trials.<sup>17</sup> According to Pier Giorgio Longo Pilate's Palace was

<sup>12</sup> Longo P.G., "Un luogo sacro ... quasi senz'anima" Carlo Bascapè e il Sacro Monte di Varallo", in *Carlo Bascapè sulle orme di Borromeo: coscienza e azione pastorale in un vescovo di fine Cinquecento* (Novara: 1994) 369, 397: 'sacro luogo' and 'luogo solitario e di contemplazione'.

<sup>13</sup> Ibidem 369, 397, note 2; Göttler C., "The Temptation of the Senses at the Sacro Monte of Varallo", in Boer W. de – Göttler C. (eds.), *Religion and the Senses in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden – Boston, MA: 2013) 441.

<sup>14</sup> Longo, "Un luogo sacro" 369–370.

<sup>15</sup> Williams W., *Pilgrimage and Narrative in the French Renaissance* (Oxford: 1999) 73.

<sup>16</sup> Clark S., *Vanities of the Eye: Vision in Early Modern European Culture* (Oxford: 2007) 165; Göttler C., *Last Things: Art and the Religious Imagination* (Turnhout: 2010) 1–30.

<sup>17</sup> See documents transcribed and translated in Longo, "Un luogo sacro" 412–416. On Bascapè's plans for the Passion area see also: Gentile, "Gli interventi" 451–461. On the architectural plans see: Stefani Perrone S., "I Sacri Monti come 'città ideale'", in Maltese C. (ed.), *Centri storici di grandi agglomerati urbani* (Bologna: 1982) 55–66; Stefani Perrone S., "Giovanni d'Enrico urbanista e architetto al Sacro Monte di Varallo in Valsesia", in Marani P.C. (ed.),

exemplary of Bascapè's new emphasis on individual experience: '[i]t was essentially and exclusively the "sacred place" of the mysteries, constructed more for a search for solitude and reflexive and interior communication with the soul of the beholding pilgrim'.<sup>18</sup> As a kind of structuring mnemonic device that grouped together the moving narratives of Christ's Passion, Pilate's Palace sought to found a 'sacred place' that might control and contain this interior experience. Moreover, the architecture of this new upper area was to be vacated of any living quarters and devoted solely to the devotional purpose function through the prohibition of eating, drinking, and selling goods.<sup>19</sup> This architectural intervention and the delineation of an urban zone was one answer to Bascapè's concerns, but within specific parameters as the urban area could not be a lived city. At the same time, the visitor was to actualise the space and thus enact an interior transformation.

Even more important to Bascapè's emphasis on individual experience was his determination that visitors were no longer to be guided around the Sacro Monte in groups led by the Franciscan custodians.<sup>20</sup> Instead, each visitor should visit the chapels alone. This stood in stark contrast to the initial phase at the Sacro Monte when the Franciscan monks led groups of pilgrims around the shrines following the order and itinerary undertaken in Jerusalem.<sup>21</sup> Given Bascapè's dismissal of this more closely controlled and collective encounter it is not surprising that the ban corresponded with other strategies of bodily discipline to mediate the experience of the sculptural tableaux. Chief among these, of course, was the installation of viewing screens carried out at this time, which also followed Alessi's scheme [Fig. 11.6]. Similarly, the proliferation of guidebooks and large printed illustrations between 1560 and 1680 speaks to a contemporary desire to order and contain the uncertain experience that was now to be primarily the burden of the visitor alone [Fig. 11.7].<sup>22</sup>

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*Fra Rinascimento, manierismo e realtà: Scritti di storia dell'arte in memoria di Anna Maria Brizio* (Florence: 1984) 129–141.

18 Longo, "Un luogo sacro" 369. 'Era essenzialmente ed esclusivamente il "luogo sacro" dei misteri, costruiti sempre più nel rispetto della ricerca di solitudine e di comunicazione riflessiva ed interiore con l'animo del pellegrino risguardante'.

19 Longo, "Il Monte e l'Itinerario" 72, note 12.

20 Longo, "Un luogo sacro" 369–370.

21 Panzanelli R., *Pilgrimage in Hyperreality: Images and Imagination in the Early Phase of the "New Jerusalem" at Varallo (1486–1530)*, Ph.D. dissertation (University of Los Angeles: 1999) 140.

22 Longo P.G., *Memorie di Gerusalemme e Sacri Monti in epoca barocca Vincenzo Fani, devoti "misteri" e "magnanime imprese" nella sua Relatione del viaggio in TerraSanta dedicata a Carlo Emanuele I di Savoia (1615–1616)* (Crea: 2010) 80–84.



FIGURE 11.6 *Galeazzo Alessi, Vetriata for the Temptation Chapel, in Galeazzo Alessi, Libro dei Misteri (1565–1569) fol. 58r. Pen and ink on paper, 40.8 × 25.8 cm. Varallo, Biblioteca Civica "Farinone-Centa" di Varallo.*  
IMAGE © BIBLIOTECA CIVICA DI VARALLO.



FIGURE 11.7 *Gaudenzio Sceti, Il Vero Ritratto di Sacro Monte di Varallo (ca. 1671). Etching, 36.1 x 25.7 cm. Archivio Civica Raccolta delle Stampe Achille Bertarelli (inv. no. P.V. m 30-48).*

IMAGE © ARCHIVIO BERTARELLI.

### The *Transfiguration* and the Ascetic Imagination

Carlo Bascapè's description of the Sacro Monte as a 'solitary place of contemplation' coincided with the commissioning of new chapels such as the *Transfiguration*. Largely overlooked in the literature on the Sacro Monte, the *Transfiguration* offers an intriguing site where the transformation of pilgrimage depended on the sense of visual withdrawal. The chapel thus shifts attention from the more communal aspects of pilgrimage toward individual transformation through penitential practice. Drawing on and transforming existing biblical and exegetical understandings of the mountain summit as a site of ascetic withdrawal and retreat, the *Transfiguration* ultimately conjoined the bodily experience of pilgrimage to more visual and imaginative devotional practices that depended on the self-reflection of the individual. Perhaps chief among the new chapels, then, the *Transfiguration* raises the tension between earlier Franciscan ideals of bodily emulation and communal, guided experience, and Bascapè's emphasis on—and legislation of—the individual's navigation of the site. Changes instituted by Bascapè indicate that knowledge of the divine had come to demand a new relationship between bodily and mental labour, especially when knowledge is acquired through pilgrimage to a place of images.

The problem of a truth manifested through the immateriality of divine light would be compounded by the difficulty of representing such effects in an emphatically material image. As I argued at the outset of this essay, the enormous stucco mountain and the narratives included in the foreground of the chapel suggest that the *Transfiguration* complicated the already uncertain visual proof of Christ's transfigured body. This difficulty is raised in relation to *The Transfiguration* by Raphael (1483–1520) in an important art treatise with links to Varallo: the 1584 *Trattato dell'Arte della Pittura, Scoltura, et Architettura* by Gian Paolo Lomazzo (1538–1600) [Fig. 11.8].<sup>23</sup> In line with my own account of Varallo's *Transfiguration*, and building on Lomazzo's consideration of Raphael's similar composition, I want to suggest that the mystery of the transfiguration complicates a neat division between immaterial divine truth and embodied experience, or between the visionary and the visual.<sup>24</sup> In Book 7, chapter 2, Lomazzo mentions Raphael's *Transfiguration* in a section on the different

<sup>23</sup> Lomazzo Gian Paolo, *Trattato dell'Arte della Pittura, Scoltura, et Architettura* (Milan, Paolo Gottardo Pontio: 1584).

<sup>24</sup> Kleinbub C., "Raphael's *Transfiguration* as Visio-Devotional Program", *Art Bulletin* 90, 3 (2008) 393, note 133. My argument extends from Kleinbub's although it moves in a slightly different direction in order to question the clear distinction between the visible and the visionary.



FIGURE 11.8 Raphael (Raffaello Sanzio), *The Transfiguration* (ca. 1518–1520). Oil on wood, 410 × 279 cm. Vatican City, Pinacoteca Vaticana.  
IMAGE © SCALA/ART RESOURCE.

methods of representing the Holy Spirit. For Lomazzo, Raphael's representation of Christ's luminous body exemplifies how the knowledge of an immaterial God can be accessed through images that represent miraculous light.<sup>25</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that the same painting is discussed in relation to the representation of light in Book 4. Lomazzo defines light in chapter 4: 'Light, then, is quality without body [...].'<sup>26</sup> This primary kind of light is further divided into three categories: light that hits the corporal body; the luminous divine body; light from external sources such as fire. Images of Christ's transfiguration and the Pentecost reveal the challenge of representing the second kind of light according to Lomazzo:

This same divine light that we are considering spread over the Apostles when the Holy Spirit illuminated them in the form of tongues of fire; it is how it was beautifully expressed by Gaudenzio [Ferrari] in a painting at Vigevano [...] This primary [kind of] light is also maintained in the great splendour that surrounded Christ [...] when he transformed on Mount Tabor, to give pleasure, and knowledge of heavenly bliss to three of his disciples, Saint John, Saint Peter, and Saint James. This mystery is represented in the large altar [painting] in St. Peter Montorio in Rome, at the hands of the wondrous Raphael.<sup>27</sup>

It is significant that Lomazzo draws attention to the epistemological codependence between embodied presence and incorporeal light in his writings, despite his claim that light is 'without body'. Rather than institute a clear

<sup>25</sup> Lomazzo, *Trattato* 531.

<sup>26</sup> Ibidem 217: 'Lume adunque è qualità senza corpo [...]. Neo-platonic philosophy is discussed in more detail just prior to this section, in book III of chapter 4. Although not unrelated to my discussion of visibility and epistemology, a detailed discussion of Lomazzo's neo-Platonic metaphysics of light is outside the purview of this discussion of solitude; instead, I raise Lomazzo's writing on light in order to investigate contemporary conceptions of the transfiguration and the co-involvement of the body in its representation. For a thorough discussion of Raphael's *Transfiguration* in relation to perception and devotional experience see Kleinbub, "Raphael's *Transfiguration*" 367–393.

<sup>27</sup> Lomazzo, *Trattato* 219: 'Questo istesso divin lume habbiamo da considerare che si spargesse sopra gl'Apostoli, quando lo Spiritosanto in forma di lingue di foco gl'illuminò; si come lo ha benissimo espresso Gaudentio sopra una tavola à Vigevano [...] Questo lumo primario è parimenti tenuto per quel gran splendore che circondava Christo [...] quando si transformò nel monte Tabor, per dar gusto, e saggio della beatitudine celeste à trecari suoi discepoli, à Santo Giovanni, Santo Pietro, è Santo Giacobo. Delqual misterio n'è fatta la gran tavola in Santo Pietro Montorio in Roma, per mano del mirabile Rafaello'.

separation between the truth of immaterial light and the imperfection of sensual world, Lomazzo allows for their close connection. It is also notable that Raphael's *Transfiguration* is called upon as exemplary of the 'knowledge of heavenly bliss' considering that it includes similar compositional difficulties in the foreground figures that would later be found at Varallo.<sup>28</sup> With its representation of the apostles on the left, and the depiction of the possessed boy on the right, Raphael's canvas reinforced both an earthly, bodily experience and a more communal search for knowledge taking place at the same time as Christ's mysterious metamorphosis.

The transfiguration could demand new forms of bodily and imaginative engagement, particularly when the epistemological claims of images were under scrutiny. As Sven Dupré has recently shown, the epistemic challenge posed by Johannes Kepler (1571–1630) in his 1604 *Optics* was met with ambivalence by Jesuit mathematicians.<sup>29</sup> Kepler undermined the cognitive basis of Catholic image theory with his assertion that the *pictura* was 'an image formed by the refraction of light only'.<sup>30</sup> The ability to attain spiritual knowledge from images is fundamentally challenged without the *species* to facilitate the transfer of knowledge from the senses to the faculties.<sup>31</sup> In response, the retention of the concept of the *species* signals the continued importance of the material image in Jesuit spirituality according to the hierarchy of the senses and the ultimate goal of the soul's ascent to its original source in God.<sup>32</sup> Much like the Jesuit interlocutors of Kepler's *Optics*, Lomazzo responded to the epistemic difficulty of knowing the divine through images, although the *Trattato* endeavoured to uphold this possibility. In fact, Lomazzo's concern with light and interest in the transfiguration echo the epistemic concerns of the Jesuit mathematicians responding to Kepler's new image theory. Clearly images and their sensual

28 The apparent gap or split between the heavenly and earthly in Raphael's composition poses a philosophical challenge that is registered in art historical reception of the painting. Philosopher Gary Shapiro summarises this literature including discussions of the painting by Hegel as well as twentieth-century art historians. See Shapiro G., *Archaeologies of Vision: Foucault and Nietzsche on Seeing and Saying* (Chicago, IL – London: 2003) 93–95, 405 note 11. My own analysis follows Shapiro who draws attention to Friedrich Nietzsche's eventual complication of the split between heaven and earth: *ibidem* 104.

29 Dupré S., "The Return of the Species: Jesuit Responses to Kepler's New Theory of Images", in Boer W. de – Göttler C. (eds.), *Religion and the Senses in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden – Boston, MA: 2013) 473–487.

30 *Ibidem* 474–475.

31 *Ibidem*.

32 *Ibidem* 476–477.

apprehension carried high stakes for the soul of the beholder, as images could still be made to allow for the ascent to spiritual knowledge.

The shifting relationship between mind and body that is raised by the narrative of Christ's transfiguration would be particularly charged at Varallo as the embodied spatial experience of Caimi's New Jerusalem was eventually replaced. It is not surprising, therefore, that the *Transfiguration* was implicated in this transformation. Its construction sparked controversy between the Franciscan custodians and the *fabbricieri* when the latter destroyed the existing *Ascension* and razed the knoll on which it was installed to make way for the *Transfiguration*.<sup>33</sup> The *Ascension* was one of Caimi's original topomimetic chapels and had replicated the domed shrine that marked the site of Christ's Ascension on the Mount of Olives; its location in relation to existing chapels replicated the sacred topography in Jerusalem.<sup>34</sup> After its removal, the Alpine topography would no longer be remade as a spatial replica of Jerusalem. Rather, the mountainous terrain would bring the pilgrim to a dramatic representation of a mountain. As the embodied experience of the local terrain is replaced with the visual apprehension of an image of sacred geography, the ascetic exercise prompted by the mountain summit is replaced as well. The attempt to conjoin the penitential labour of the body to the interiority of the imagination would be a difficult proposition, as the scale of the mountain and the inclusion of narrative scenes in the immediate foreground suggest. It is significant that Galeazzo Alessi's proposal for the *Transfiguration* did not include an enormous mountainside or any additional narrative episodes at its base [Fig. 11.9]. In the text that accompanied his drawing Alessi writes:

Here I have made the drawing of the transfiguration of our Lord Jesus Christ to increase the knowledge of those who have to follow the[se] plans. In the middle I would like to artificially elevate a little of the mount in imitation of that real Mount Tabor where this mystery happened, to be surrounded on each side by the viewing screen, and entered through four doors from each side the devout can contemplate this mystery.<sup>35</sup>

33 Debiaggi C., "La cappella della Trasfigurazione", *Il Sacro Monte di Varallo* 61, 6 (1985) 3–6; Pomi D., *La parola si fa arte: luoghi e significati del Sacro Monte di Varallo* (Milan: 2008) 97–98.

34 Debiaggi C., "Le cappelle dell'Ascensione, dell'Apparizione di Gesù ai discepoli, e l'originaria topografia del Sacro Monte di Varallo", *Bollettino storico per la provincia di Novara* 2 (1978) 56–81; Panzanelli, "Pilgrimage in Hyperreality" 12, 120.

35 Alessi Galeazzo, *Libro dei misteri: Progetto di pianificazione urbanistica, architettonica e figurativa del Sacro Monte di Varallo in Valsesia (1565–1569)*, ed. S. Stefani Perrone

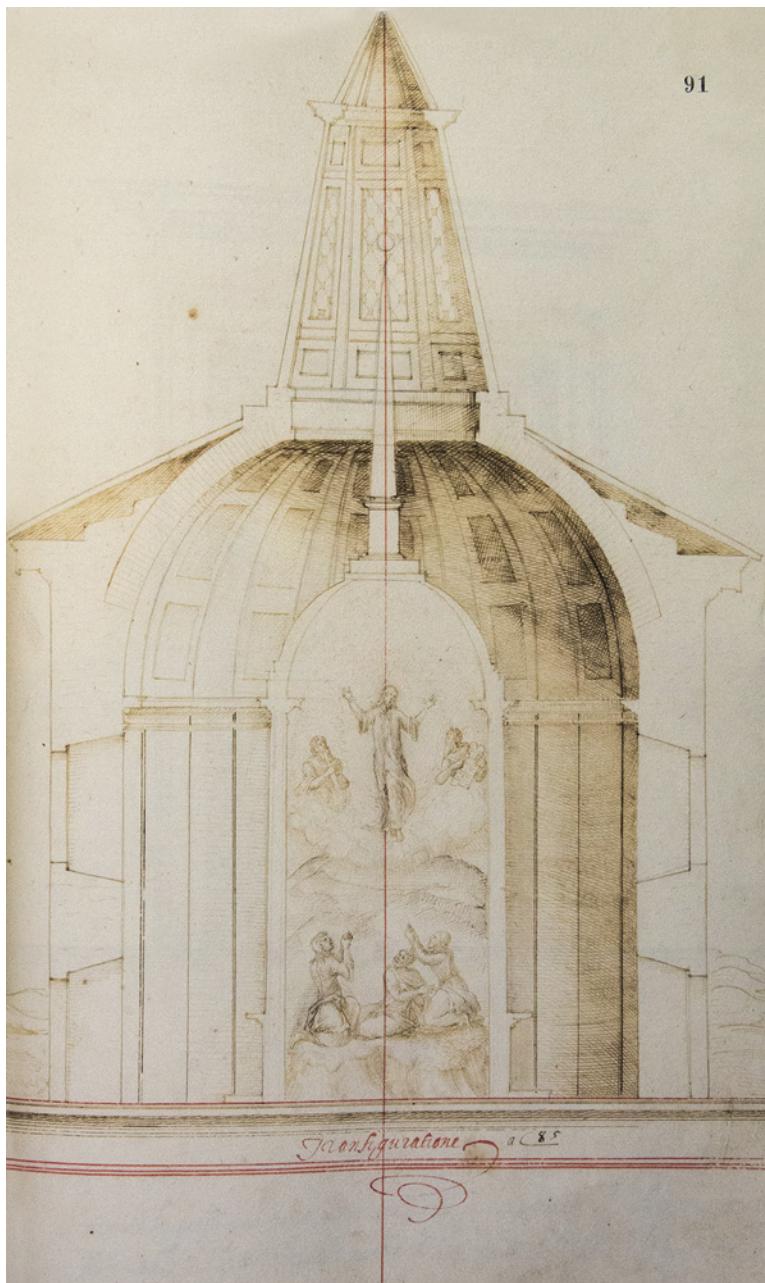


FIGURE 11.9 *Galeazzo Alessi, Interior of the Transfiguration Chapel, in Libro dei Misteri (1565–1569) fol. 91r. Pen and ink on paper, 40.8 × 25.8 cm. Varallo, Biblioteca Civica "Farinone-Centa" di Varallo.*

IMAGE © BIBLIOTECA CIVICA DI VARALLO.

The viewing conditions described by Alessi for the *Transfiguration* suggest a contemporary concern with the status of vision and the experiential aspects of pilgrimage to the Sacro Monte.<sup>36</sup> Alessi proposed that the chapel should be viewed in the round from below on all four sides [Fig. 11.10]. This spatial configuration inverts the architect's proposed conditions of viewing *Purgatory*, *Limbo*, and *Hell* that were to be constructed outside the walls of the Sacro Monte in the "Valley of Jehosephat".<sup>37</sup> As the illustration of the chapel of *Purgatory* shows, Alessi's chapels of the Last Things would position the viewer above the chapel interiors [Fig. 11.11]. Standing on a raised platform around the circular *vetriata* pilgrims could converse and engage with fellow visitors as they indulged their curiosity from a position of mastery above these theatrical scenes of suffering souls. Recalling that Bascapè would later insist that the Sacro Monte was a purely 'sacred place', it is significant that Alessi used the term 'curiosi' to describe the visitors to these chapels outside the walls of the Sacro Monte and the term 'devoti' to describe the visitors within its walls.<sup>38</sup> This stands in striking contrast to the experience of viewing the *Transfiguration* from a kneeling position in front of pre-ordained openings in the viewing screen. As Alessi's drawing of the 'vetriata' for the *Temptation* demonstrates, this was a more static and individual viewing experience that was in line with Charles Borromeo's contemporary reform of confessional screens.<sup>39</sup>

When the *Transfiguration* was built the chapel retained Alessi's circular design, but viewing took place from only one side. Kneeling behind the viewing screen at the *Transfiguration*, the pilgrim was spatially constituted below Christ's miraculous transformation to encourage awe rather than curiosity, encouraging a more solitary viewing experience. However, the visibility of the

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(Varallo, n.pr.: 1565–1569; Bologna: 1974) 90v: 'Quivi all'incontro ho fatto il disegno de la Trasfiguratione di N[ost]ro S[ignore] Jesu Christo per maggiore intilligentia di questi che haveranno a eseguir l'opera impero che io vorrei che in mezzo a esso si facesse artifiosamente elevare un poco di Monticello ad imitatione di quel vero monti Tabor dove successe questo misterio, il quale fusse cinto d'ogni intorno de la sua vetriata et in esso s'entrassse per gratto porte, accio da ogni lato potressero le denoti persone contemplar detto misterio'.

<sup>36</sup> On the dangers of curious vision in pilgrimage to the Sacro Monte see Göttler, *Last Things* 101–110.

<sup>37</sup> Ibidem 89.

<sup>38</sup> Ibidem 89–90.

<sup>39</sup> Ibidem 95–96. Göttler notes that Borromeo's concern with the architectural control of the body also retained the public display of bodily discipline. In this regard the comparison to the confessional screens offers an interesting tension with the more solitary experience being solicited at Varallo.

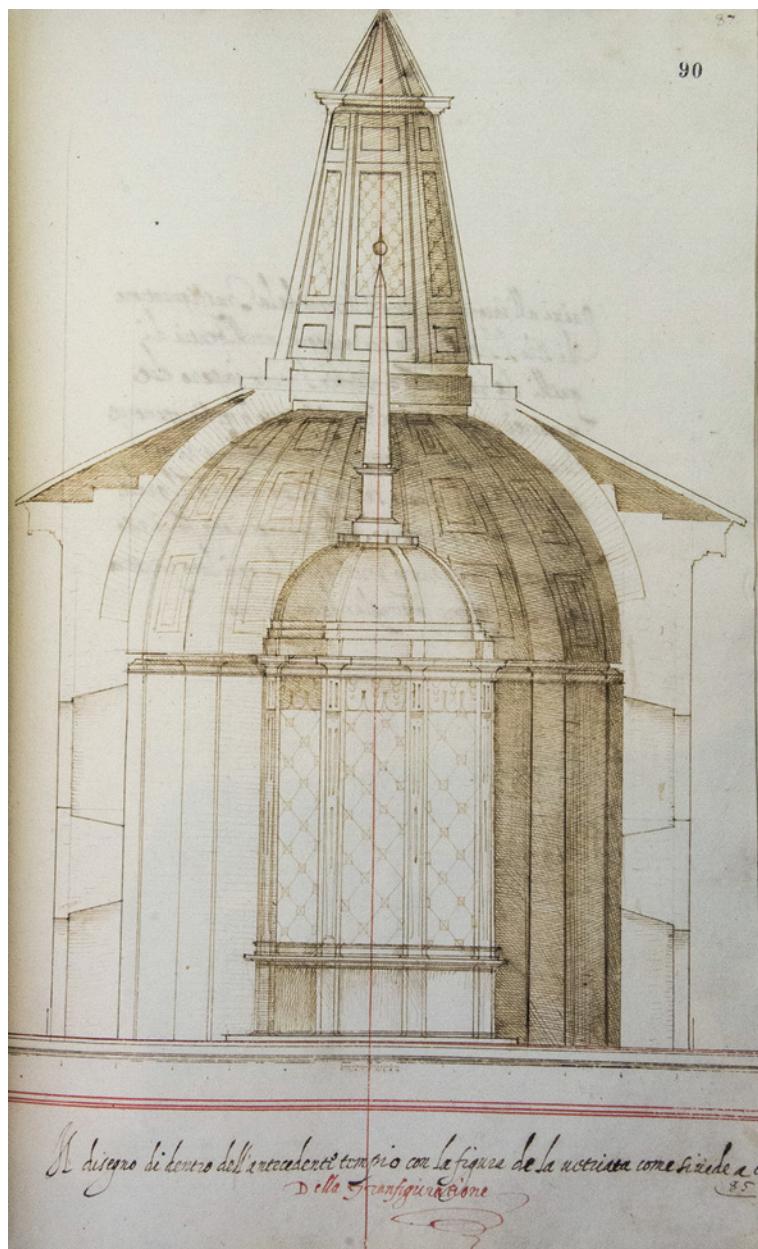


FIGURE 11.10 *Galeazzo Alessi, Viewing screen for the Transfiguration Chapel, in Libro dei Misteri (1565-1569) fol. 90r. Pen and ink on paper, 40.8 x 25.8 cm. Varallo, Biblioteca Civica "Farinone-Centa" di Varallo.*  
IMAGE © BIBLIOTECA CIVICA DI VARALLO.

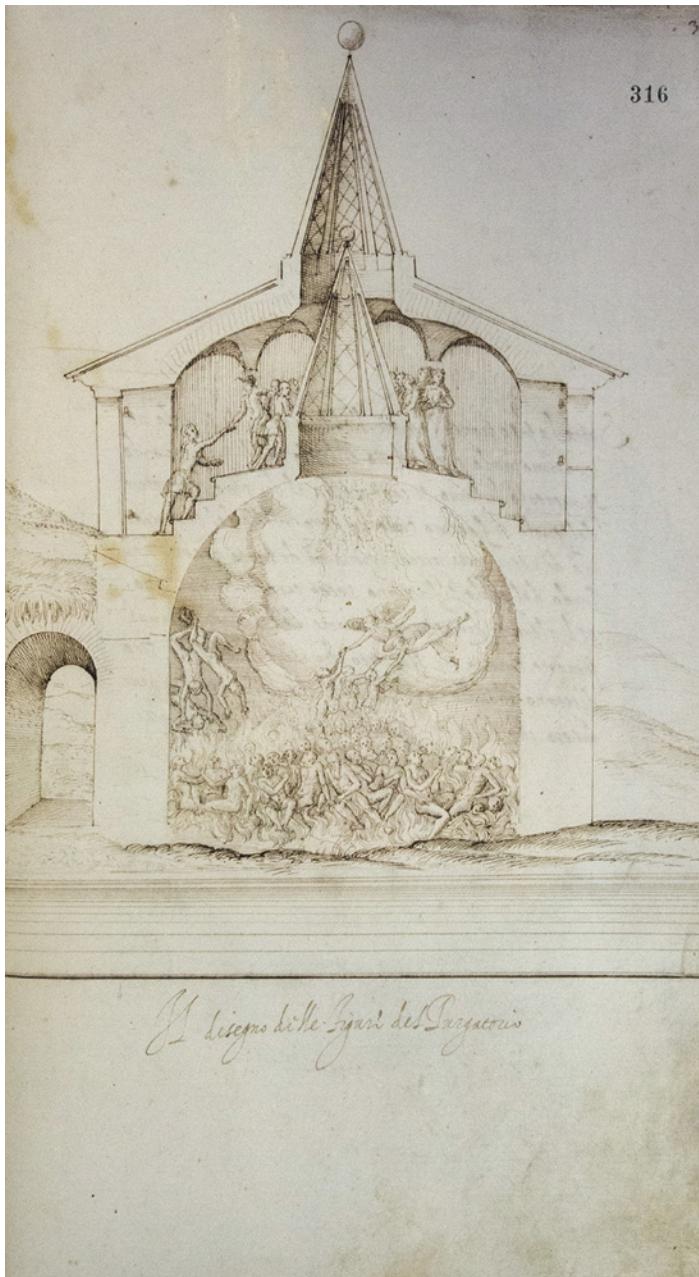


FIGURE 11.11 *Galeazzo Alessi, "A Drawing of the Figures of Purgatory", in Libro dei Misteri (1565-1569) fol. 316. Pen and ink on paper, 40.8 x 25.8 cm. Varallo, Biblioteca Civica "Farinone-Centa" di Varallo.*

IMAGE © BIBLIOTECA CIVICA DI VARALLO.

central narrative and the height of Mount Tabor continued to be a topic of concern. In 1671 Giovanni Battista Fassola describes the chapel at length, including problems encountered by *fabbricieri* with regard to the size of the mountain:

Inside is the mountain that represents Sinai, but [designed] to be rather high, the Congregation of *fabbricieri* have ordered it lowered, so that it will be more pleasurable to the eye.<sup>40</sup>

The possibility of lowering the mountain is associated here with less difficult viewing, in contrast to the usual associations of mountains with bodily struggle and the labour of ascent. The more “pleasurable” experience could undermine such ascetic connotations, which are central to more traditional penitential conceptions of pilgrimage. When completed, of course, the mountain was not lowered, and the desire for a more immediate encounter with the image of Christ’s divinity is not only frustrated by the mountainside that distances Christ from the pilgrim, but also by the foregrounded figures who emphasise the struggles and failures of earthly doubt. Thus, the effect of viewing the miracle of Christ’s transfiguration came to depend on the active engagement of the pilgrim who was forced to traverse, visually and imaginatively, the expanse that lay between their location at the viewing screen and Christ’s sculpted body.

Vision is central to the experience of the chapel, as evidenced by a description of the unfinished *Transfiguration* in the 1613 guidebook introduced earlier. Dedicated to Carlo Bascapè, the *Brevi Consideratione sopra I Misteri del Sacro Monte di Varallo* foregrounds the importance of vision and images at Varallo as well as a concern with solitude and communal experience. The printer’s preface explicitly states that the guide will ‘put all these acts in front of the eyes’ of the reader.<sup>41</sup> The entry to the *Transfiguration* follows the strict format deployed throughout the guide: three separate sections direct the reflections of the reader and pilgrim to first “Consider”, then “Contemplate”, and finally to “Learn”. In this way, visual description of the chapel decoration is replaced with textual clarification that circumscribes its meaning. In the first section the author asks

40 Fassola Giovanni Battista, *La Nuova Gerusalemme o sia il Santo Sepolcro di Varallo* (Milan, Federico Agnelli: 1671) 93: ‘Di dentro ha il Monte, che raffigura il Sinai, mà per essere al quanto alto, la Congregazione da Fabriceri ha ordinate d’abbassarlo, acciò sia più godibile dall’occhio’. Fassola’s elision of Sinai and Tabor is not accidental, although further discussion is outside the scope of the current essay. See Della Dora V., *Mountain: Nature and Culture* (London: 2016) 42–44.

41 Ferrari, *Brevi Considerationi* np: ‘postui avanti gli occhi tutti quegli atti [...].’

the reader to consider the narrative itself, describing Christ's withdrawal to the mountain summit with his disciples and highlighting the transformation of incarnate flesh into immaterial, divine light. Here, a sense of acute visual access to the miracle replaces the imperfect visibility raised by the disciples' slumber and the lack of discussion of the event after it took place. These are not the focus of the inducement to "Consider" the transfiguration; instead, the event is understood to have taken place 'in the presence of everyone'.<sup>42</sup> Communal experience is tempered in the next section:

Contemplate, how Christ wanted to give sight of his glory to them, [he] brought them on high on top of a mountain, ascending there, who[ever] wants to see the Glory needs to leave the valley of earthly thoughts, [and] ascend the mountains of celestial meditations.<sup>43</sup>

The goal of contemplation requires the act of withdrawal and retreat from the world. Ascending literally and imaginatively at the *Transfiguration* actualises a metaphorical retreat in line with the ideal of solitude set out by Carlo Bascapè. The rejection of earthly things is invoked again in the final lines of the third section when the didactic purpose of the chapel is revealed according to both individual and communal benefit:

Learn to keep hidden those qualities [more often] if you don't have some of those which could make you devout and admirable in the sight of men [...] that can serve for the greater Glory of God, or for your own private good, or for the public. Not wanting to remain so attached to the lowly things of the world, but giving yourself now to the pious and other meditations if you want to enjoy the view of Christ for grace in this life and glory in the other.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Ibidem np.

<sup>43</sup> Ibidem np: 'Contempla, come volendo Giesu dare a vedere se stesso glorioso a questi, gli conduce all'alto, sopra d'un monte, accendandoci, che chi vuole veder la Gloria, bisogna che lasciando le valli di terreni pensieri, ascenda I monti delle celesti meditationi'.

<sup>44</sup> Ibidem np: 'Impara a tenere nascoste si il piu delle volte quelle doti, se n'hai alcuna le quali ti potrebbono rendere lo deuote, e mirabile nel cospetto de gli huomini [...] cio puo servire per maggior Gloria di Dio, o per tuo bene priuato, o per il public. Non volere essere ancora tanto attacato alle cose basse del mo[n]do, ma datti tal hora alle pie, e altre meditationi se vuoi godere della vista di Giesu v per gratia in questa vita, e per gloria nell'altra'.

The retention of the vast scale of the mountain suggests that the visual withdrawal of Christ from the gaze of the pilgrim was crucial to the experience of this miraculous transfiguration. Paradoxically, the difficulty of vision that suggests retreat is necessary in order to achieve communion and recognition.

The rejection of the earthly world has profound implications at a pilgrimage site that leads the pilgrim to God by way of their contemplation of material images. Indeed, this essay has sought to understand the complex attitudes towards the ideal of retreat in the *Transfiguration* in light of post-Tridentine ambivalence toward the danger and potential of visual images and pilgrimage. As the image was made to do new kinds of work within existing practices of pilgrimage at Varallo, the tradition was transformed in order to demand something new from the visitor. The *Transfiguration* offers an intriguing site where post-Tridentine innovation and experiment are set into relief, demonstrating the transformation of more communal notions of pilgrimage as much as earlier exegetical ideals of ascetic retreat. The compositional withdrawal of the sculpture of Christ's luminous body far from the sight of the pilgrim underscores a new purpose for the image at Varallo: to withhold the 'external object' of knowledge from corporal vision in order to highlight the interior, imaginative labour of the pilgrim who is left without a guide and kneeling before the viewing screen, alone at the summit.

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## **PART 4**

### *Architectures of Solitude*

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# Dead Men Talking: The *Studiolo* of Urbino. A Duke in Mourning and the Petrarchan Tradition\*

*Christiane J. Hessler*

There is a society in the deepest solitude.

ISAAC D'ISRAELI

••

## Introduction

The *studiolo*, or more simply a study—a type of room intended for the most private, contemplative purposes—was situated in a very remote, quiet wing of a noble palazzo beginning with its emergence in France during the early fourteenth century. Since Wolfgang Liebenwein's fundamental monograph on the subject, the fact that this room was based on ideals of *solitudo* has clearly been substantiated, as has Petrarch's (1304–1374) role as inaugurator of the notion of a *studiolo* both in theory and in practice.<sup>1</sup> In contrast, what has been sparsely investigated is how individual occupants of such a room, fundamentally devoted

\* For the generosity of their support, I wish to thank Giuseppe Germano, Emmanuel Decouard, Siham Issami, and Wendy Wallis.

1 For Petrarch's *De vita solitaria*, see (throughout the text I shall refer to the following edition): Petrarcha Francesco, *De vita solitaria: Buch I. Kritische Textausgabe und ideengeschichtlicher Kommentar*, Leidse Romanistische Reeks van de Rijksuniversiteit te Leiden 24, ed. K.A.E. Enenkel (Leiden et al.: 1990); for Petrarch's own solitary way of life, which he actively put into practice at Vaucluse and Arqua, see *ibidem* xxix, 142–143. On *studioli* in general, see Liebenwein W., *Studiolo: Die Entdeckung eines Raumtyps und seine Entwicklung bis um 1600* (Berlin: 1977); the term *studiolo* was already in use in the fourteenth century; see *ibidem* 30; for the use of the term 'scrittoio' with respect to the *studiolo*, see Thornton D., *The Scholar in His Study: Ownership and Experience in Renaissance Italy* (New Haven, CT – London: 1997) 183, note 21; for the history of the *studiolo* in Renaissance Italy, see Campbell S., *The Cabinet of Eros: Renaissance Mythological Painting and the Studiolo of Isabella d'Este* (New Haven, CT: 2006) 29–57.

to the *vita contemplativa*—and this must vary according to each individual—specifically understood *solitudo*, and for what purposes they effectively used this architecturally staged and specifically desired aloneness.<sup>2</sup> For lack of indisputable documents, what remains a clue to today's scholar—in addition to the profile of the commissioning patron—is chiefly only the decorative programme in question. As I will show, however, this can be quite illuminating as far as a conceivable connection can be aligned with the imaginative world, as it appears in Petrarch's treatise *De vita solitaria (On the Solitary Life)* of 1366.

My observations below are focused on the best preserved, undoubtedly most well-known quattrocento *studiolo*. Recently (and correctly) designated as a 'unicum', it belonged to the most successful *condottiere* general in fifteenth-century Italy, the important bibliophile and art patron Federico da Montefeltro (1422–1482), who had it built in his *Palazzo Ducale* in Urbino, along with another *studiolo* in Gubbio to follow.<sup>3</sup> As featured in my title, I intend to focus primarily on a peculiarity of its design: the circumferential portrait gallery [Fig. 12.1] that depicts an ongoing, lively discussion between great minds of the past. The subject matter interpreted in this context seems out of place in an atmosphere meant for introspection. It immediately brings to mind the notion of 'divine power', which Leon Battista Alberti (1404–1472) had generally attributed to portraiture in his treatise *De pictura (On Painting)* of 1435. Such power, or presence, was able to 'represent the dead to the living many centuries later', as if the sitters were alive and spiritually present.<sup>4</sup> It is not insignificant that

<sup>2</sup> As early as 1432–1434, Alberti had expressed a sincere wish for privacy in his study. There he kept his books and records and those of his ancestors well sealed; see Alberti, *I libri della famiglia, III: Alberti Leon Battista, Opere volgari*, ed. C. Grayson, 3 vols. (Bari: 1960), vol. 1, 219. On the secrecy of the study, see also Cortesi Paolo, *De Cardinalatu* (Città Cortegiana, Simone Nicolò de' Nardi: 1510), see Weil-Garris K. and D'Amico J., *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 35 (1980) 45–119, 121–123.

<sup>3</sup> 'Unicum' is Valazzi's characterisation of the *studiolo* of Urbino, in Marchi A. (ed.), *Lo Studiolo del Duca: Il ritorno degli Uomini Illustri alla corte di Urbino*, exh. cat., Galleria Nazionale delle Marche, Urbino (Milan: 2015) 14. One of the most enlightening analyses of the *studiolo* of Urbino can still be found in Cheles L., *The Studiolo of Urbino: An Iconographic Investigation* (Wiesbaden: 1986) 93–95; Liebenwein, *Studiolo* 83–96. For Federico da Montefeltro's biography, see Tommasoli W., *La vita di Federico da Montefeltro (1422–1482)* (Urbino: 1978); and Roect B. – Tönnesmann A., *Die Nase Italiens: Federico da Montefeltro, Herzog von Urbino* (Berlin: 2005) 165–171 (on the *studiolo*). For the *studiolo* of Federico d'Urbino in Gubbio (ca. 1475–1482), see Liebenwein, *Studiolo* 97–99; and Olga Raggio, "The studiolo del palazzo ducale di Gubbio", in Dal Poggetto P. (ed.), *Piero e Urbino, Piero e le corti rinascimentali*, exh. cat., Palazzo Ducale e Oratorio di San Giovanni Battista, Urbino (Venice: 1992) 361–367.

<sup>4</sup> See Alberti Leon Battista, *De pictura* 11, 25 (cf. Alberti L.B., *On Painting and Sculpture: The Latin Texts of the De Pictura and De Statua*, ed. C. Grayson (London: 1972) 60–61: 'Nam habet



FIGURE 12.1 *Reconstruction of Justus of Ghent's and Pedro Berruguete's Famous Men* (ca. 1474–1476) of the eastern wall of the studiolo of Federico da Montefeltro, Palazzo Ducale, Urbino.

IMAGE © FOTO MODERNA, URBINO.

the planning of a secluded place for the *studiolo* of Urbino coincided with the genuine loneliness of its user. The young wife of the Montefeltro duke died in 1472—and this fact, which encompasses his period of bereavement, will be weighed alongside iconological considerations for the first time.

ea quidem in se vim admodum divinam non modo ut quod de amicitia dicunt, absentes pictura praesentes esse faciat, verum etiam defunctos longa post saecula viventibus exhibeat [...]. Itaque vultus defunctorum per picturam quodammodo vitam praelongam degunt'.— 'Painting possesses a truly divine power in that not only does it make the absent present (as they say of friendship), but it also represents the dead to the living many centuries later [...]. Through painting, the faces of the dead go on living for a very long time'. For a discussion on prevalent Renaissance ideas related to portraiture; see Cranston J., *The Poetics of Portraiture in the Italian Renaissance* (Cambridge, MA: 2000) 1–14; and Bolzoni L., *Poesia e ritratto nel Rinascimento* (Rome: 2008).

### Federico's *Studio*: A Room of His Own

Shortly before 1474, the year in which the title of duke was bestowed upon him, Federico da Montefeltro—who was in his fifties—had a *studio*, with access to an exterior loggia, built and decorated for him from around 1473–1476. The study is located on the first floor (the *piano nobile*), on the west side of the duke's palace at Urbino, between the ducal bedroom and his dressing chamber (*guardaroba*).<sup>5</sup> It has not come down to us, who provided the duke with the iconographic programme.

In addition to court *studios* of other rulers of his era, like that of Leonello d'Este (1407–1450), the duke was surely granted access to the *solitudo* tradition through Petrarch's famous treatise, of which two manuscripts could be found in his exquisite library.<sup>6</sup> While the seclusion and privacy of the location of the *studio* in Urbino takes up older models for this room type, the interior décor of this small chamber [Fig. 12.2]—measuring 3.60 × 3.35 metres, and with a height of nearly five metres—indicates a clear shift of emphasis away from opulence and ostentation, a fact that is also in unison with Petrarch's ideals of self-sufficiency and modesty.<sup>7</sup> *Studio* had been used since the early

5 For a floor plan of the Palazzo Ducale, see Liebenwein, *Studio* 86, fig. 20; for the west front with the loggia, see Cheles, *The Studio* 127, fig. 3. The *studio* included references to the 'Duke' Federico, a title that he did not receive until 24 August 1474. An inscription beneath the ceiling of the *studio* with the year '1476' probably indicates the date of its completion; on the inscription, see Cheles, *The Studio* 15. The study in close proximity to the bedroom is discussed at length in Thornton, *The Scholar* 33–38.

6 The manuscripts of Petrarch's *De vita solitaria* in the duke's possession are Ms. Vat. Urb. lat. 333, fols. 54r–135r (fifteenth century) and Ms. Vat. Urb. lat. 1171, fols. 1r–11r (fourteenth century); see no. 108 and no. 109 respectively for full details in Petrarch, *De vita solitaria* (ed. Enenkel) 50; for its subsequent fortunes in Europe, see *ibidem* xvii. Documentation shows that another owner of a *studio*, Borso d'Este (1413–1471), commissioned an Italian translation of Petrarch's *De vita solitaria* from Tito Vespasiano Strozzi; see Campbell, *The Cabinet of Eros* 38. Another conceivable influence on Federico da Montefeltro may have been the hermit Bernardino of Siena (1380–1440), who left behind writings on the subject, and whom the duke held in high esteem his entire life; see Facchinetti P., *San Bernardino da Siena: Mistico sole del secolo XV* (Milan: 1933) 398, 402–403, 250.

7 According to Petrarch, *De vita solitaria* 1, 2, 14, the *solitarius* is content with humble materials instead of pomp. In his biography of Lorenzo *Il Magnifico*, written around 1513, Niccolò Valori presents Federico da Montefeltro as a great critic of pure pomposity. Federico is said to have preferred real treasures such as the collection of books of Lorenzo de' Medici: 'proh quantum studium, et amor potest! Video Regiam supellectilem, sed quam Regum nullus pecuniis suis, non bello, non auctoritate parare possit'.—'That is the sweet power of enthusiastic study! I see furnishings worthy of a king, but of a type [i.e. books] that no king could match with his



FIGURE 12.2 *Reconstruction of Justus of Ghent's and Pedro Berruguete's Famous Men* (ca. 1474–1476) of the northern and eastern walls of the studiolo of Federico da Montefeltro, Palazzo Ducale, Urbino.

IMAGE © FOTO MODERNA, URBINO.

*estudes*—for instance by the French King Charles V (1364–1380)—as private treasures and chambers for the display of cabinet pieces, such as well-chosen books, precious objects, curiosities, and *memoranda*. This still held true in the 1460s for the study of Piero di Cosimo de' Medici in Florence.<sup>8</sup> The encounter with such an inventory in the *studiolo* of Federico d'Urbino is surprisingly manifested only as cited allusions in the form of intarsia motifs, which is to say merely pictorially.<sup>9</sup> Well-known artists produced these *trompe-l'oeil* inlays with the utmost finesse.<sup>10</sup>

Above this continuous wooden marquetry, reminiscent of choir stalls, which completely covers the lower portion of the wall, and to a height that is taller than the average man (i.e. ca. 2.50 m), painters once used vivid colours in their contributions intended to crown and perfect an unusual pictorial reality. Before the individual portraits they painted found their way into museums, there were originally two rows of galleries showing twenty-eight nearly life-size famous men seated in aedicula.<sup>11</sup> This pictorial series was presumably carried out by the Flemish painter Justus of Ghent and/or the Spaniard Pedro

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riches, neither through battle nor by his authority'. See Valori Niccolò, *Laurentii Medicei Vita*, ed. L. Mehus (Florence: 1749) 19.

8 For a detailed characterisation of the 'schrittoio' (i.e. *scrittorio*) of Piero di Cosimo de' Medici (alias *il Gottoso*) in the Palazzo Medici at Florence, see Filarete's extensive account of ca. 1461–1464; Filarete saw rare books, precious stones, jewels, coins, etc.; see Filarete Antonio, *Trattato di architettura*, ed. A.M. Finoli, 2 vols. (Milan: 1972) [xxv, fol. 187r], vol. 2, 686. The context and role of the objects collected and displayed in *studioli* is excellently discussed by Ruvoldt M., "Sacred to Secular, East to West: The Renaissance Study and Strategies of Display", *Renaissance Studies* 20, 5 (2006) 640–657; see also Thornton, *The Scholar* 99–114.

9 This does not necessarily mean that no works of art in Federico's *studiolo* were preserved. On the motifs of the inlays, see Cheles, *The Studiolo*, figs. 41–58.

10 According to Giorgio Vasari, Federico da Montefeltro commissioned Benedetto da Maiano and his brother Giuliano with this woodwork decoration; see Vasari Giorgio, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori ed architettori* [...] (Florence: 1981); for the attribution question, see Bertelli C., "Le tarsie", in Marchi A. (ed.) *Lo Studiolo* 59–65. Earlier *studioli* apparently also included intarsia decorations. There were earlier intarsia precedents. A poem, written around 1459, referred to intarsia in the *studiolo* of Cosimo de' Medici (1389–1464) in the Palazzo Medici; see Ceccarelli M.P., "Le 'terze rime' in lode di Cosimo de' Medici: Ipotesi su un manoscritto", *Notizia da Palazzo Albani* 16, 2 (1987) 24–50, 40; and Rohark T., *Intarsien: Entwicklung eines Bildmediums in der italienischen Renaissance* (Göttingen: 2007) 41–42, note 90.

11 In the nineteenth century, the representations of 'Famous Men' were divided between the Louvre and the Galleria Nazionale at Urbino; see Marchi A. (ed.), *Lo Studiolo* 14–15.

Berruguete.<sup>12</sup> As soon as the duke entered his *studiolo*, he found himself in the 'painted company' of these illustrious, learned men, mainly depicted with books. Especially the idealised portraits of historical authors from the past, ranging from Aristotle to Virgil, served the purpose of evoking the memories of their writings.<sup>13</sup>

The duke's well-informed biographer, Vespasiano da Bisticci (1421–1498), called this room an 'istudio' ('study'), after 1485 in the earliest preserved source.<sup>14</sup> In view of the predominantly muted light (there was only a single high window above the door)—and given the existence of a spacious and very important library on the ground floor of the palace—it seems more than doubtful whether this chamber could, in fact, be used for longer periods of reading, even if a table had been placed in the centre, as one source from a later period, 1587, attests.<sup>15</sup> It almost seems as if the abundance of books [Fig. 12.2] represented

12 See Vespasiano da Bisticci's account of Federico's preference of a painter from Flanders, who made many paintings for his *studiolo*; see Vespasiano da Bisticci, *Vite di uomini illustri del secolo XV*, ed. L. Frati, 3 vols. (Bologna: 1892–1893), vol. 1, 295: '[...] mandò infino in Fiandra, per trovare uno maestro solenne, e fello venire a Urbino, dove fece fare molte pitture di sua mano solemnnissime; e maxime in uno suo istudio, dove fece dipingere i filosofi e poeti e tutti i dottori della Chiesa così greca come latina, fatti con uno maraviglioso artificio; ritrasse la sua Signoria al naturale, che non gli mancava nulla se non lo spirito'.—'[Federico] sent as far afield as Flanders to find a worthy master; and he brought him to Urbino, where he had him paint stately pictures, especially in his study, where he had the philosophers, poets and doctors of the Church painted—Greek as well as Latin—[and] done with splendid skill; there he painted his lordship from life, which work lacks only breath'. And a 'Pietro Spagnolo pittore' worked for the Urbino court; see Marchi A. (ed.), *Lo Studiolo* 108–109. Cheles was right to emphasise that Vespasiano's remark remains ambiguous: there is no clear indication that 'la sua Signoria al naturale' refers to the large-scale "Double Portrait of Federico da Montefeltro with His Son Guidobaldo" (it is now widely regarded as a work of Pedro Berruguete), nor can it be concluded that it hung in the *studiolo*; see Cheles, *The Studiolo* 17–18, plate I. Due to these unresolved questions, I do not wish to include this portrait as a point of departure for my argumentation.

13 References to specific books of the learned men portrayed have been well researched by Cheles, *The Studiolo* 40–52 and *passim*.

14 For Vespasiano, see note 12 above.

15 For the text with Baldi's description (*Descrizione del palazzo ducale d'Urbino*) of 1587, see Baldi B., *Vita e fatti di Federico di Montefeltro*, ed. C. Stornajolo, 3 vols. (Bologna: 1826), vol. 3, 286: '[...] ed una tavola nel mezzo' ('and a table in the middle'). In contrast the *studioli* by Piero *il Gottoso* and that of Isabella d'Este must have been used for reading: according to Filarete, Piero *il Gottoso* used to read books or to have them read aloud to him in his study (Filarete, *Trattato di architettura* [xxv, fol. 187r], vol. 1, 686: 'E così quando uno e quando un altro si leggie o fa leggere; [...]'); and two inventories of books have been preserved from the *studiolo* of Isabella d'Este (1497–1530); see Campbell, *The Cabinet of*

in the intarsia and portraits were meant to replace the real ones. In short, it is just a mimetic evocation of a world of books. Thus, although the designated use of the chamber remains unclear, Liebenwein (1977) and Cheles (1986) had already correctly recognised 'a far-reaching new creation' in comparison to the *studioli* that preceded it.<sup>16</sup> The first impression that the room makes is of an appropriate setting for a sacred place dedicated to the *ars meditationis*.

### *Uomini Famosi: Great Minds and Identity*

The portrait gallery, encircling all four walls, is made up of celebrated figures from the past, most of them authors from antiquity, consisting of famous philosophers, poets, scholars, Church Fathers, and popes, but also early Renaissance luminaries.<sup>17</sup> Even though Petrarch himself, who communicates with Dante [Figs. 12.3–12.4], and five pious *exempla* of the *vita solitaria* from Petrarch's monograph—the Church Fathers and Moses—figure among them, when considered along with the entire portrait frieze, it cannot be seriously maintained that the owner of the *studiolo* wanted to position himself in line with a solitary way of life first and foremost.<sup>18</sup>

*Uomini illustri* cycles were not that uncommon in fifteenth-century Italy; but in Urbino it can be said that at least some of the personalities selected for portrayal were unusually personal.<sup>19</sup> Among them was Federico da

*Eros* 270–279. For more on Federico d'Urbino's important library; see Simonetta M. (ed.), *Federico da Montefeltro and His Library*, exh. cat., The Morgan Library (Milan: 2007), with further references. In view of the light conditions in the *studiolo*, Liebenwein, *Studiolo* 90, refers to the rhetorician Demosthenes; in order to concentrate better, he secluded himself in a dark room to study by lamplight so that his eyes might not oblige his mind; see Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* x, 3, 25.

<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless Liebenwein, *Studiolo* 93, believed that it is 'the most mature kind of a pure study'. According to Kirkbride R., *Architecture and Memory: The Renaissance Studiolo of Federico da Montefeltro* (New York, NY: 2008) 107, the *studiolo* in Urbino served the following functions: [...] ranging from reflective repose to matters of civil justice, political negotiations, and leisurely conviviality'.

<sup>17</sup> For instance 'Pius II' (d. 1464), 'Bartolomeo Sentinati' (d. 1357), 'Pietro d'Abano' (d. 1316); see Cheles, *The Studiolo*, figs. 30, 27, 34.

<sup>18</sup> Petrarch mentions famous philosophers, poets, saints, and hermits as *exempla* for creative activity in solitude; see Petrarch, *De vita solitaria* II, 1, chapter 4–6 (Jerome, Ambrose, Augustine, Gregory).

<sup>19</sup> Valazzi M.R., "Gli Uomini Illustri dello studiolo di Federico da Montefeltro: Gli studi", Marchi A. (ed.), *Lo Studiolo* 13–17; for the history of series of famous men in particular Hansmann M., *Andrea del Castagnos Zyklus der "Uomini famosi" und der "Donne famose"*,

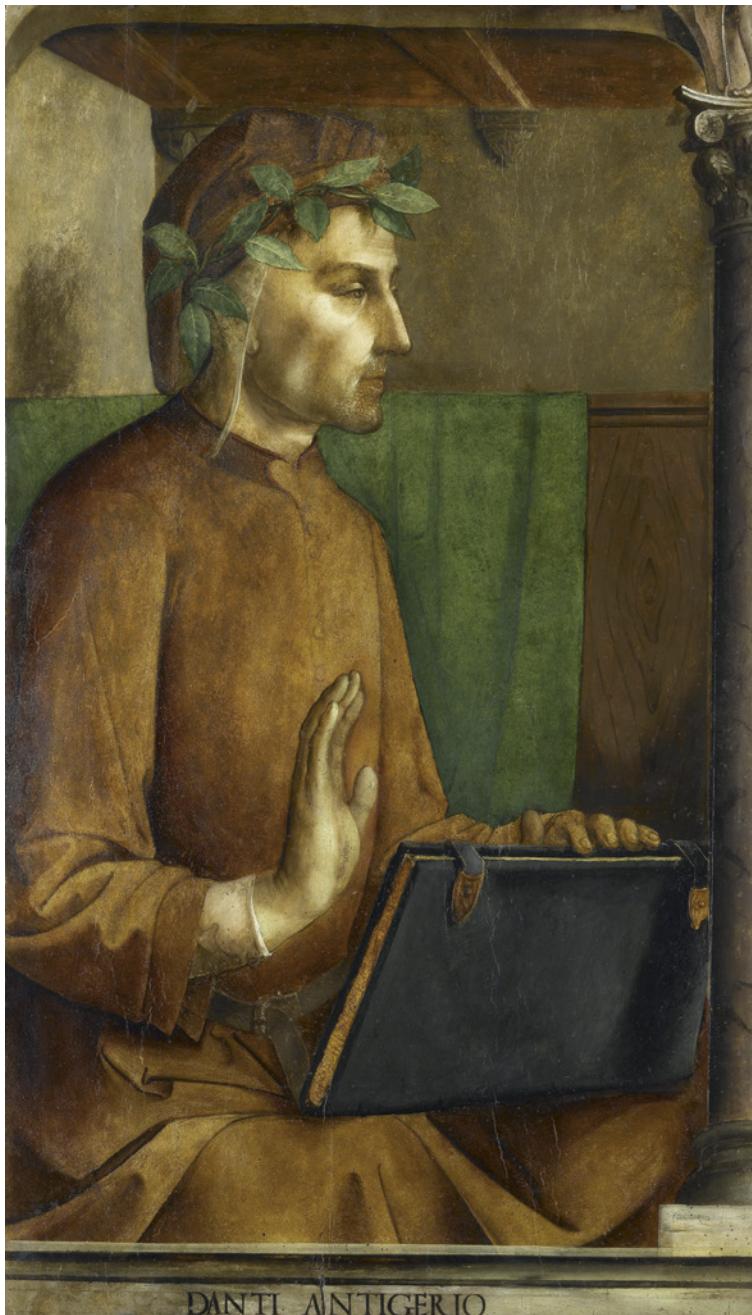


FIGURE 12.3 *Justus of Ghent and Pedro Berruguete, Dante, painted for the studiolo of Federico da Montefeltro (ca. 1476). Oil on wood, 115 x 64.5 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre (inv. no. M.I. 648).*

IMAGE © BPK/RMN-GRAND PALAIS/GÉRARD BLOT.



FIGURE 12.4 *Justus of Ghent and Pedro Berruguete, Petrarch, painted for the studiolo of Federico da Montefeltro (ca. 1476). Oil on wood, m.2 x 57.9 cm. Urbino, Galleria Nazionale delle Marche (inv. no. 1990 D 45).*

IMAGE © BPK/SCALA.

Montefeltro's renowned teacher at the Mantuan school known as *Ca'Zoiosa* (or *Casa Gioiosa*), Vittorino da Feltre (1378–1446) and, on the left side of the south wall, the illustrious Greek scholar Cardinal Bessarion (1403–1472) [Fig. 12.5]. A long-standing friendship connected the cardinal with the duke, and not just him alone. There must have been reasons why Giovanni Gatti, a close follower of Bessarion, when he was consoling the widower, called the duke's wife, Battista Sforza (ca. 1446–1472), Bessarion's 'soul daughter' ('filiam suam spiritualem'); only half a year after her sudden passing, in November 1472, Bessarion himself would die.<sup>20</sup> This contemporaneous death in particular, which immediately preceded the construction and decoration of Federico's *studiolo*, makes us aware that—except for the current Pope Sixtus IV (d. 1484), who was the only living person granted a portrait—only deceased great minds came to be represented in the *studiolo*.<sup>21</sup> That Bessarion's physical likeness is shown with such conviction, and that despite his impending death he appears both present and vigorous (as do the other figures who are portrayed), makes a sad compensatory dimension perceptible in the virtual reality provided here, which is all the more understandable since the widower of Urbino had also lost his 'best friend'. A Latin inscription that once existed on the stone base of the portrait (all the panels below have been cut away in the interim) described him as such.<sup>22</sup> Today, only the name of the person depicted has survived in the dative ('BESSARIONI'), as well as beneath its twenty-seven pendants. We need to imagine the progression of the inscriptions—they have all been handed down to us thanks to the transcriptions of a traveller, Lorenz Schrader, in 1592—below the name of each famous man portrayed.<sup>23</sup> In spite of how conventional they sound, especially those inscriptions for the universally

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Bonner Studien zur Kunstgeschichte 4 (Münster – Hamburg: 1993); Reynaud N. and Ressort C., "Les portraits d'Hommes illustres du Studiolo d'Urbino au Louvre par Juste de Gand ed Pedro Berruguete", *Revue du Louvre* 41, 1 (1991) 82–114; for portraits of *uomini illustri*, see Alberti, *De re aedificatoria* VII, 16 and VIII, 1.

20 Bessarion passed away on 18 November 1472; for the condolence letter from Gatti, written to the duke, see Cinquini A., *Il codice Vaticano-Urbinate latino n93: Documenti ed appunti per la storia letteraria d'Italia nel Quattrocento*, 2 vols. (Aosta: 1905–1909) 1909; 6–16, 15; for Bessarion's letter, see *ibidem* 17–20.

21 Cheles, *The Studiolo*, fig. 32; Sixtus IV was the one responsible for appointing Federico 'duke', with a papal bull on 14 August 1474.

22 See note 24.

23 It is worth noting that this traveller labelled the duke's *studiolo* 'museum'; for the inscriptions ('IN MUSEO ORNATIONE'), see Schrader Lorenz, *Monumentorum Italiae, quae hoc nostro saeculo et a Christianis posita sunt, libri quatuor* (Helmstedt, Jacobus Lucius: 1592) fol. 283v; fols. 283v–284v; all inscriptions are listed by Cheles, *The Studiolo* 93–95.



FIGURE 12.5 *Justus of Ghent and Pedro Berruguete, Bessarion, painted for the studiolo of Federico da Montefeltro (ca. 1476). Oil on wood, 116 × 56.1 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre (inv. no. M.I. 646).*

IMAGE © BPK/RMN-GRAND PALAIS/GÉRARD BLOT.

respected great minds, they bear witness to Federico da Montefeltro's quite individual, subjective criterion of esteem for each of the figures. In essence, the focus and manifestation of such appreciation in his most private room respectively owed itself to 'gratitude' ('ex gratitudine'), as can be explicitly read in the addenda. For example, the 'epitaph' in Bessarion's case resounded as follows:

To Bessarion, the peace-maker of the Graeco-Latin conference, and wisest and best of friends, for his outstanding authority and excellence of teaching, Federico placed this.<sup>24</sup>

In other words, the definitions that emerged from the portrait inscriptions were confessions of the intellectual profile, the identity, yes, even the innermost core or spiritual being of the duke himself, much like an autobiography. This inclination is quite strongly reminiscent of the *Meditations* by Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius (121–180 CE), which are a prototype of reflective practice written for no one else but oneself.<sup>25</sup> In the opening passage the emperor ascribed which virtue he owed to each personality (always beginning with a name). For instance: 'From Apollonius: moral freedom, not to expose oneself to the insecurity of fortune' (1, 8), or 'From Maximus: mastery of self and vacillation in nothing' (1, 15), etc.<sup>26</sup> As a testimony to a unique formation of intellectual identity, the selection and epigraphic grounds for the preferred, like-minded *uomini illustri* in the *studio* in Urbino—which reveal the owner's ideal self—cannot have come from anyone else but Federico d'Urbino. Nevertheless, despite this individualised self-representation, the implied immanent dialogue with specific traits of others also belonged to a more general scholarly and humanist habitus of inventing, shaping, and [re-]constructing the self.<sup>27</sup> In principle, the notion that solitude could incorporate a sociable element, in that it afforded the opportunity to cultivate true and genuine friendships and cordial relations

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Cheles, *The Studio* 95, no. 24: 'Bessarioni, Graeci Latini[que] conventus pacificatori, ob summam gravitatem doctrinaeq[ue] excellentiam, Fed[ericus] amico sapientiss[imo] optimoq[ue] posuit'.

<sup>25</sup> The existence of the book was known since Late Antiquity; it was not published until 1558; see Piętka R., "A Lost Chance: Some Remarks on Ancient Autobiographies", *Eos* 90, 2 (2003) 275–283, esp. 277.

<sup>26</sup> *The Meditations of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antonius*, ed. A.S.L. Farquharson, 2 vols. (Oxford: 1944), vol. 1, 6–7; 10–11.

<sup>27</sup> For many years, Gadi Algazi has been making crucial research contributions to the shaping of the scholar's way of life and habitus; see, for instance, Algazi G., "At the Study: Notes on the Production of the Scholarly Self", in Sabean D.W. – Stefanovska M. (eds.), *Space and Self in Early Modern European Cultures* (Toronto: 2012) 17–50.

with a select, like-minded and erudite few, was wholly in keeping with the cultural model that marked the Renaissance period.<sup>28</sup> However, when the duke of Urbino retired alone to this small chamber, what purpose could such a decorative concept serve him?

### Petrarch and the Addressed Soliloquy in Solitude

It proves helpful to look at those details which Petrarch in his pioneering book, *De vita solitaria*, had made into the goal and purpose of solitude: first, the search for God, second, the striving for self-awareness, and third, the search for an intellectual soul mate.<sup>29</sup> The *uomini famosi* in Urbino undoubtedly fulfilled the latter two functions quite well. The iconographic peculiarity correctly pointed out by Cheles (1986), which distinguishes them from customary cycles of famed personalities, deserves attention in this context; namely the arrangements of the portraits in pairs [Figs. 12.3–12.4].<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, the focus is directed to their prominent communicative features, because most of the scholarly pairs turn towards each other in lively gestures of debate. This is immediately evident in the example of the Greek Homer and the Roman Virgil, manifesting a dispute beyond the boundaries of space and time. Others from this pantheon, like Bessarion [Fig. 12.5], turn towards the centre of the room, almost as if they might strike up a conversation with the man who at one time had come seeking active contemplation.

This curiosity, which initially conjures up words by Pliny the Elder, in view of honorary busts in libraries, that these 'are set up [...] in honour of those

<sup>28</sup> On the common rituals and practices of friendship and on the idea that a friend is 'the other self', see Langer U., *Perfect Friendship: Studies in Literature and Moral Philosophy from Boccaccio to Corneille* (Geneva: 1994) 189–211; and see, in addition, Baader H., *Das Selbst im Anderen: Sprachen der Freundschaft und die Kunst des Porträts 1370–1520* (Paderborn: 2015), *passim*; and Cranston, *The Poetics of Portraiture* 62–97.

<sup>29</sup> Petrarch, *De vita solitaria* 1, 1 (ed. Enenkel) 61: '[...] sive conformem nobis querimus animum'—'[...] or whether we are seeking for a mind in harmony with our own'. All of the English translations from Petrarch's book that are cited in my essay are taken from Zeitlin's translation: Francis Petrarch, *The Life of Solitude*, ed. J. Zeitlin (Urbana, IL: 1924) 105.

<sup>30</sup> See Cheles, *The Studio* 19: NORTH WALL: "Plato" – "Aristotle"; "Ptolemy" – "Boethius"; "Gregory" – "Jerome"; "Ambrose" – "Augustine"; EAST WALL: "Cicero" – "Seneca"; "Homer" – "Virgil"; "Moses" – "Solomon"; "Thomas Aquinas" – "Duns Scotus"; SOUTH WALL: "Euclid" – "Vittorino da Feltre"; "Solon" – "Bartolus"; "Pius II" – "Bessarion"; "Albertus Magnus" – "Sixtus IV"; WEST WALL: "Hippocrates" – "Pietro d'Abano"; "Dante" – "Petrarch".

whose immortal spirits speak to us in the same places', manifests an even greater dependence on Petrarch's solitude ideal on closer inspection:<sup>31</sup> it is the 'conversation with sublime spirits of the past' ('colloqui cum omnibus, qui fuerunt gloriosi viri'), a kind of meditative, 'inner dispute' that complies with the desire to communicate with those absent or greatnesses of mind who are dead; it is recommended to the *solitarius* as an activity during solitude.<sup>32</sup>

It is useful to delve deeper into the passages in the *De vita solitaria* about this kind of conversation: at first the discussion is about soliloquising (1, 2, 14), whose prerequisite is a high level of erudition; only then will the *solitarius* succeed in not being mute, but rather to become an 'interlocutor himself' ('ipse sibi fabulator'), thanks to the 'conversation with books' ('cum libris loqui'), and that infers a dialogue with the authors.<sup>33</sup> Calling on his own experiences,

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31 ' [...] quorum immortales animae in locis isdem locuntur', cf. Pliny, *Natural History* xxxv, 9; see Pliny, *Natural History in Ten Volumes*, ed. H. Rackhasm (London: 1952), vol. 9, 266–267. Shortly before referring to the ducal library in Urbino, Polydore Vergil had quoted this remark in a book from 1499 (*De rerum inventoribus*), which was dedicated to Ludovico Odasio, the teacher of Federico's son; see Polydore Vergil, *On Discovery*, ed. B.P. Copenhaver (Cambridge, MA: 2002) 244.

32 For an introduction, see Chines L., "Loqui cum libris", in Berra C. (ed.), *Motivi e forme delle Familiari di Francesco Petrarca* (Milan: 2003) 367–384; see also Pieters J., *Speaking with the Dead: Explorations in Literature and History* (Edinburgh: 2005); Brogsitter K.O., *Das hohe Geistergespräch: Studien zur Geschichte der humanistischen Vorstellungen einer zeitlosen Gesellschaft der großen Geister* (Bonn: 1958); Bec C., *Cultura e società a Firenze nell'età della Rinascenza* (Rome: 1981) 228–244; I do believe that Brogsitter borrowed the term 'hohes Geistergespräch' from Nietzsche; see Nietzsche F., "Die Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen", ed. G. Colli – M. Montinari, *Nietzsche—Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, 9 vols. (Berlin: 1973), vol. 2, part 3, 302: ' [...] idealisierte Philosophengesellschaft [...]: ein Riese ruft dem anderen durch die öden Zwischenräume der Zeiten zu und ungestört [...] setzt sich das hohe Geistergespräch fort'.

33 Petrarch, *De vita solitaria* 1, 3, 19 (ed. Enenkel) 81: 'Quod precipue literarum ignaris evenire solet, quibus si confabulator desit, quid secum quidve cum libris loqui valeant, non habent, itaque muti sunt'.—' [...] this will happen particularly with persons who have no acquaintance with literature. Such men, if they have no one to talk to, are destitute of any resource for communion with themselves or with books, and necessarily remain dumb'. Cf. Petrarch, *The Life of Solitude* (ed. Zeitlin) 131; on soliloquies in isolation, see ibidem 68 and Cicero, *Tusculanae disputationes* 3, 63; cf. Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, ed. and trans. J.E. King, Loeb Classical Library 141 (London: 1966) 300–301: 'Sunt autem alii quos in luctu cum ipsa solitudine loqui saepe delectat' (Hence it comes that, in times when the soul is grieved, others seek out solitude'). The roots of this *topos* lie partly in how certain poets addressed a book (Horace, Ovid, and Martial for example). They did not consider a book as a mere object, but instead as a humanised manifestation of the author; able to feel, hear, speak, and move on its own; see Citroni M., "Le raccomandazioni del poeta:

Petrarch puts the aim of these actions in concrete terms: namely to think about the most sublime things, to have 'spirits as conversation partners' ('collocutores spiritus') and to strive after 'beatific visions' ('visiones beatificas'; I, 5, 7). In the meditative process which makes this possible, one's own mind turns back, traversing and remembering all places and times (I, 6).<sup>34</sup> In the second book, also in the context of the epistolography, Petrarch finally asserts the possibility of summoning back to himself those who have gone, whenever he wishes and 'at [his] own discretion' (II, 4).<sup>35</sup> As is well known, Petrarch made extensive use of this option with his collection of fictitious letters addressed to long deceased famous authors; they form the twenty-fourth book of his *Epistolae familiares* (*Familiar Letters*).<sup>36</sup>

Quite a number of long-held threads to tradition merge together in Petrarch's concepts here. While the longing for a conversation with a loved one or an esteemed person from the hereafter (as well as the imaginary presence of those who are absent) represents one of the earliest cultural motifs, from which monuments to the Montefeltro dukes, traditional literature genres and motifs must have been well known—especially Virgil, as Dante's chosen conversation partner in the *Divine Comedy*—Petrarch's idea of the 'conversation with sublime spirits of the past' is based on additional sources.<sup>37</sup> Among the

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apostrofe al libro e contatto col destinatario", *Maia* 38 (1986) 111–146; Wissig-Baving G., *Die Anrede an das Buch in der römischen Dichtung*, Ph.D. dissertation (Frankfurt am Main et al.: 1991).

34 Petrarch, *De vita solitaria* I, 6, 6 (ed. Enenkel) 96 (for the text passages mentioned previously, see *ibidem* 91): '[...] mittete retro memoriam perque omnia secula et per omnes terras animo vagari; versari passim et colloqui cum omnibus, qui fuerunt gloriosi viri'.—'[...] to travel back in memory and to range in imagination through all ages and all lands; to move about at will and converse with all the glorious men of the past'. Cf. *The Life of Solitude* (ed. Zeitlin) 150.

35 Petrarch, *De vita solitaria* II, 4; cf. Ambrosius, *Epistula* 49; see *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.P. Migne, 221 vols. (Paris: 1844–1864), vol. 16 [Paris: 1845] 1153.

36 The importance of Petrarch's *Familiares* has been brought to light by Eden K., *The Renaissance Rediscovery of Intimacy* (Chicago, IL – London: 2012), *passim*, see 49–72 especially on the letter as a replacement for conversation. In Ovid, *The Heroines* 18, 19–20, letter-writing was also understood as a form of monologue or soliloquy.

37 See the richly decorated *Divine Comedy* made for Federico da Montefeltro (Ms. Urb. lat. 365): *Il Dante Urbinate della Biblioteca Vaticana* (*Codice Latino* 365), ed. L. Michelini Tocci, 2 vols. (Rome: 1965), *passim*. The dialogue tradition also played a role: for Lucian's *Dialogues of the Dead*, and *Charon*; see March D., *Lucian and the Latins: Humor and Humanism in the Early Renaissance* (Ann Arbor, MI: 1998) 42–75; for the roots of *De tumulis* (*On Grave Mounds*) of the Neapolitan humanist Giovanni Pontano, see Parenti G., "L'invenzione di un genere: Il 'Tumulus' pontaniano", *Interpres* 7 (1987) 125–158; on the speaking tomb, see Cranston, *The Poetics of Portraiture* 168–191.

various ideas, he was heavily influenced by the humanistic belief of the immortality and ubiquity of the word, a guarantee for the lasting ‘vitality’ of the authors. Even the practice of reading aloud, i.e. of speaking, was not without its influence. Books with which the *solitarius* can ‘speak’ can therefore take the place of his fellow man for him in his solitude.<sup>38</sup>

The fact that the ‘conversation with books’ was indeed known at the court of Urbino through Petrarch’s *De vita solitaria* was documented in the frieze of an inscription, which according to the duke’s librarian, Federico Veterano, was once installed in the library. The inscription paraphrased a line of Petrarch’s, stating: ‘[...] the library is at hand if you command it to speak very skilfully, or command it to be silent’.<sup>39</sup>

Consequently, it is more than probable that the theme of debating *uomini illustri* in the *studiolio* of Urbino—a painted community of figures out of time—was supposed to serve the duke as stimulation for the described *exercitio*, in what we would call ‘addressed soliloquies’ today.<sup>40</sup> In Angelo Decembrio’s (1415–after 1467) dialogue from around 1463, *De politia litteraria* (*On Literary Refinement*), a painting is indeed reputed to have had such an inspiring effect on the owner of a study, namely on the marquis of Ferrara, Leonello d’Este: it showed St. Jerome writing in the wilderness, we are told, ‘by which we direct the mind to the library’s privacy [solitudinem] and quiet and the application necessary to study and literary composition’.<sup>41</sup>

38 For the personification of the book in Antiquity and the Middle Ages, see Wenzel H., *Hören und Sehen, Schrift und Bild: Kultur und Gedächtnis im Mittelalter* (Munich: 1995) 214–225; on reading aloud, see Saenger P.H., *Space between Words: The Origins of Silent Reading* (Stanford, CA: 1997) 382.

39 In a register, Veterano cites the inscription written in hexameters; Baldi mentions the inscription in his *Descrizione* (1587) as well, and also Schrader; for the complete inscription, see Rotondi P., *Il Palazzo Ducale di Urbino*, 2 vols. (Urbino: 1950), vol. 1, 469–470; esp. 470, note 245: ‘[...] Biblioteca parata est, / Iussa loqui facunda nimis, vel iussa tacere’; compare this with books as ‘pleasant [...] companions’ in Petrarch, *De vita solitaria* II, 14 (ed. Enenkel) 519: ‘[...] libros [...] per quos aut de quibus scripti sunt comites gratos [...], paratosque semper vel tacere vel loqui’.—‘books [...] in whose substance and authors one has pleasant [...] companions [...], always prepared to be silent or to speak’. Cf. *The Life of Solitude* (ed. Zeitlin), 291.

40 Lotmann J.M., ‘Die Autokommunikation: Das ‘Ich’ und der ‘Andere’ als Adressaten. (Über zwei Kommunikationsmodelle im System der Kultur”, in idem, *Die Innenwelt des Denkens* [Russian: 1973] (Berlin: 2010) 31–52.

41 See Angelo Decembrio, *De politia litteraria* 1, chapter 3, quoted in Baxandall M., ‘Guarino, Pisanello and Manuel Chrysoloras’, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 28 (1965) 183–204, 196: ‘Ideoque saepenumero cernere est quibusdam iucundissimam imaginem esse Hieronymi describentis in eremo, per quam in bibliothecis solitudinem et silentium et studendi scribendique sedulitatem opportunam advertimus’ (‘We often see

As far as we know, and can surmise, the portrait installation at Urbino was a provocative innovation for a Renaissance *studiolo*, because in place of books the personified presence of the authors in the form of portraits was considered valid for intimate, 'face-to-face' exchanges. Nevertheless, the predecessors for such a pantheon had already been taking shape. They can be found, for instance, in the Paduan frescoes in the "Sala dei Giganti", and more importantly in Lombardo della Seta's (d. 1390) preface to Petrarch's unfinished collection of biographies *De viris illustribus* (*On Famous Men*). Here, Seta celebrated the success of the author (Petrarch) on assembling all the famous men around him into a single book; in essence what Petrarch had created was much like an erected pantheon ('clarissimo domicilio'), and the famous men were ready to talk.<sup>42</sup>

Bearing in mind Bessarion's recent death, a very important accent of the *conversatio librorum* (or *conversatio auctoris*) striven for in Urbino is not included in this reference, however, especially in a setting with an almost sacred, chapel-like character. A few years before, in 1468, while bequeathing his large and significant library to the Republic of Venice, Cardinal Bessarion had proved himself to be a follower of Petrarch. Hence, it was not merely the aspiration for erudition that the 'voices of the wise' coming from living, debating

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some pleasant image of St. Jerome at his writing in the wilderness, by which we direct the mind to the library's privacy and quiet and the application necessary to study and literary composition'; cf. Campbell, *The Cabinet of Eros* 32. Without any doubt, the cycle of nine Muses in Leonello's study in the palace of Belfiore was also intended as a source of inspiration; for more information, see *ibidem*.

42 Petrarch, *De viris illustribus*, ed. G. Martellotti (Florence: 1964) xxv: 'Franciscum Petracam [sic] laureatum, cuius ingenii divinitatem animadvertisimus [...], viros omnes prestantissimos, quos illustres appellat, diversis librorum monumentis quasi quibusdam regionibus dissipatos, in uno volumine, tanquam in clarissimo domicilio colloccare molientem [...].—[...] Francis Petrarch, the poet laureate, of whom we have seen the divine greatness of his ingenuity [...] was forced to unite all the most famous men whom he calls illustrious into a single volume, as in a pantheon—men who had [previously] been scattered through diverse books as if in diverse [geographical] locations'. An echo of the 'conversation with sublime spirits of the past' can also be found in Lombardo della Seta's preface of his dialogue *De dispositione vite sue ad Franciscum Petracam laureatum* of 1369; see Enenkel K.A.E., "Lucilius redivivus: Zur Seneca-Rezeption des Frühhumanismus. Lombardo della Setas Briefdialog 'De dispositione vitae sue", in Leonardi C. (ed.), *Gli umanesimi medievali. Atti del 11 Congresso dell' Internationales Mittelalterkommittiee*, Florence, Certosa del Galluzzo (Tavernuzze – Impruneta – Florence: 1998) 111–120; and idem, "The Author's Portrait as Reader's Guidance: The Case of Francis Petrarch", in Brusati C. – Enenkel K.A.E. – Melion W.S. (eds.), *The Authority of the Word: Reflecting on Image and Text in Northern Europe* (Leiden: 2012) 151–177, 176.

and loquacious books serve; moreover, according to Bessarion: 'they console us'.<sup>43</sup> No one has accentuated the unbelievably comforting power that might be derived from such imagined 'voices' quite as engagingly as Petrarch did in a letter to Giacomo Colonna in 1338:

Some [books] give me counsel for my life and death;  
 [...]; some with jesting words  
 Dispel my sadness, and I smile again;  
 Some teach me to endure, to have no longing,  
 To know myself.<sup>44</sup>

### Mourning and Consolation

Without having drawn much attention in the research, there are no shortages of connotations about mourning in the *De vita solitaria*; strokes of fate—like death—have always been one of the strongest motivations for withdrawing into solitude.<sup>45</sup> The retreat of one of Petrarch's early biographers, Giannozzo Manetti (1396–1459), to his country estate at Vacciano after the tragic death of his four-year-old son in 1438 comes to mind.<sup>46</sup> It is one more indication that

43 [...] quippe pleni sunt libri sapientium vocibus, pleni antiquitatis exemplis [...]; vivunt, conversantur, loquunturque nobiscum, docent nos, instruunt, consolantur, resque a memoria nostra remotissimas quasi praesentes nobis exhibent et ante oculos ponunt'.— 'From books we hear the voices of the wise, the exempla of antiquity [...]; books live, they debate and they address us directly; they teach and instruct us; they console us. They present us with things far removed from memory, setting them before our eyes as real, as if they were present [today]'; the Latin text is quoted from Labowsky L., *Bessarion's Library and the Biblioteca Marciana* (Rome: 1979) 147–156, 147; and Fiaccadori G. (ed.), *Bessarione e l'Umanesimo*, exh. cat., Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Venice (Naples: 1994) 220.

44 See Petrarch, *Epistola metrica* 1, 6, lines 190–191, 193–195; cf. Petrarca Francesco, *Rime, Trionfi e Poesie Latine*, ed. F. Neri – G. Martelotti – E. Bianchi – N. Sapegno (Milan – Naples: 1951) 736: [...] pars optima vite/ consilia et mortis/ [...] pellant fastidia verbis,/ quiique iocis risum revehant, sunt omnia ferre/ qui doceant, optare nihil, cognoscere sese/ [...]'; (translation cf. Wilkins E.H., *Life of Petrarch* (Chicago, IL: 1961) 20).

45 See *inter alia* Cicero, *Tusculanae disputationes* 3, 63.

46 Manetti, who was well-informed on Petrarch's hermitical 'domum parvam' in Arqua, explicitly wrote that he went to his villa at Vacciano to be alone; for Manetti's remark on Petrarch's solitary life, see Manetti Giannozzo, *Vita di Dante, Petrarca e Boccaccio*, ed. Stefano Baldassari (Palermo: 2003) 152; for Manetti's time of grief and mourning, see Petris A. de, "Manetti and His 'Consolatoria'", *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*

self-imposed solitude—as in a *studiolo*—always represents a desired distance from something(!).

Petrarch's book states that the *solitarius* prays for the dead (1, 2). It speaks of promises to bring the mourners joy (1, 3; 1, 7); and in regard to sorrow and fear, Petrarch cites *Psalm 144[145]:14*: 'the LORD upholds all who are falling and raises up all who are bowed down' (1, 4), because solitude was meant to be a stronghold and a harbour, which is well protected against all storms.<sup>47</sup>

There are numerous reports about the grief-stricken atmosphere at the court of Urbino as of 6 July 1472, the day on which Battista Sforza, only twenty-six years old, succumbed to death by fever. It was half a year after the birth of the long-awaited heir to the throne, Guidobaldo. For this reason court panegyrics could elevate Battista to the status of a martyr.<sup>48</sup> The authenticated words of the widower Federico d'Urbino, written to the Doge Niccolò Tron in a letter, state that in his situation he 'could do nothing, but suffer vehemently'.<sup>49</sup> Petrarch would have designated this condition of the soul, between grief and lethargy, as 'accidia' ('acedia').<sup>50</sup> As the Neapolitan poet Porcellio de' Pandoni (1409–1485) so succinctly phrased it, in that moment the duke of Urbino 'forgot

45 (1979) 493–525, 499. In 1438, Manetti took up his pen to console himself. He wrote the *Consolation Dialogue on the Bitter Death of His Cherished Son*. For a full analysis of this book, see Schaeben U., *Trauer im humanistischen Dialog: Das Trostgespräch des Giannozzo Manetti und seine Quellen* (Munich: 2002); on the importance of the subject McClure G.W., *Sorrow and Consolation in Italian Humanism* (Princeton, NJ: 1991) 93–115.

47 Petrarch, *De vita solitaria* 1, 4, 10 (ed. Enenkel) 86: 'allevat Dominus omnes, qui corruunt, et erigit omnes elisos'.

48 Panegyrists lauded her willingness to sacrifice her life for the continuity of the dynasty Montefeltro; see Motta U., *Castiglione e il mito di Urbino: Studi sulla elaborazione del "Cortegiano"* (Milan: 2003) 89–90; on the poems and letters of condolence written to the duke in 1472, which Veterano compiled, see Cinquini, *Il codice Vaticano-Urbinate latino 1993*. On Federico d'Urbino's mourning, see his biographers; for example (ca. 1474) Paltroni Pierantonio, *Commentari della vita et gesti dell'illusterrissimo Federico Duca d'Urbino*, ed. W. Tommasoli (Urbino: 1966), chapter 21, 277; and Santi Giovanni, *La vita e le geste di Federico di Montefeltro*, ed. L. Michelini Tocci, 2 vols. (Vatican: 1985) xiiii, chapter 55, vol. 2, 410–413, 75–181; Bonvini Mazzanti M., *Battista Sforza Montefeltro: Una "Principessa" nel Rinascimento Italiano* (Urbino: 1993) 162.

49 See Federico's letter to Tron, dated July 1472: '[...] non potui non vehementer angi'; cf. Bonvini Mazzanti, *Battista Sforza* 173. The widower expressed himself similarly in his answer to the condolence letter from Pope Sixtus IV, who is represented in the *studiolo*; see Cinquini, *Il codice* 59–60; see also Ser Gaugello della Pergola, *Canzone de Vita et morte ill.: D. Baptistae Sforiae Comitissae Urbini*, ed. A. Cinquini (Rome: 1905) 27 and 36.

50 For a more detailed analysis, see Wenzel S., "Petrarch's Accidia", *Studies in the Renaissance* 8 (1961) 36–48; and McClure, *Sorrow and Consolation* 25.

himself for pain' ('[...] oblitus ille dolore sui est').<sup>51</sup> He must have thirsted for a private retreat to try to find himself again, and the *studiol* undoubtedly best represented this for him.

### 'Only the Images of the Things': Intarsia and Inner World

In this context an unusual detail of the full-length portrait of Federico da Montefeltro in the intarsia on the north wall deserves attention [Fig. 12.6]. In 1978, Westfall pointed out that the duke's spear points downwards, which—along with other possible theories—he felt could be a sign of mourning. Since, according to Virgil's *Aeneid*, all the warriors held their weapons upside down during Pallas's funeral.<sup>52</sup> If other latent allusions to the loss of Federico's wife were intended in his 'room for himself', then these were most likely in the intarsia motif, characterised as the motherly love of Charity [Fig. 12.7].<sup>53</sup> Together with the two other Theological Virtues (Hope and Faith), which are equally dominant in the image—there is no precedent in Renaissance *studiol* for this focus—and, as can be read on a scroll, they lead 'to the stars' ([...] ITUR AD ASTRA). This topical phrase frequently adorns epitaphs, because in the *Aeneid* it could be read that it was through virtue that men can reach the stars ('sic itur ad astra').<sup>54</sup> In Martino Filetico's elegy from 1472, *Discite, mortales, nullo damnare deorum/ Numina* (*Learn, O mortals, never to condemn the will of the Gods*), astral ascent is mentioned several times; and in another consolatory poem, addressed to Federico da Montefeltro, a friend of Bessarion, the

<sup>51</sup> See Cinquini, *Il codice* 200; see also Zannoni G., "Porcellio Pandoni ed i Montefeltro", *Rendeconti della Reale Accademia dei Lincei* 5, 4 (1895) 104–122, 111, 488.

<sup>52</sup> Virgil, *Aeneid* x1, 93; ed. H. Rushton Fairclough (London: 1986) 240–241: '[...] Tyrrhenique omnes et versis Arcades armis'—'[...] and all the Tuscans and the Arcadians with arms reversed'; see Westfall C.W., "Chivalric Declaration: The Palazzo Ducale in Urbino as a Political Statement", in Millon H.A. – Nochlin L. (eds.), *Art and Architecture in the Service of Politics* (Cambridge, MA: 1978) 20–45, 37, fig. 8.

<sup>53</sup> It has been claimed that Federico d'Urbino intended Piero della Francesca's "Brera Altarpiece" of ca. 1473–1474 ("The Virgin and Child Enthroned and Attended by Angels and Saints") to memorialise Battista Sforza through her patron St. John the Baptist; see Bunker J.R., *Piero della Francesca: Artist and Man* (Oxford: 2014) 166.

<sup>54</sup> The full inscription on the *studiol* scroll reads: 'VIRTUTIBUS ITUR AD ASTRA' ('With virtue, man scales the stars'), cf. Virgil, *Aeneid* IX, 641; 158; Virgil's words are also cited in a dialogue between *Petrarch* and *Augustine*, see Petrarch, *My Secret Book* 1, 6; on the conditions for the *elevatio*/rapture (1, 8; 36); and for discourse about meditation on death and the human misery, see *ibidem* 2.



FIGURE 12.6   *Workshop of Giuliano da Maiano, Federico da Montefeltro (ca. 1474). Wooden intarsia. Urbino, Palazzo Ducale, northern wall of the studiolo of Federico da Montefeltro.*

IMAGE © SOPRINTENDENZA PER I BENI ARTISTICI  
E STORICI DELLE MARCHE.



FIGURE 12.7 *Workshop of Giuliano da Maiano, Charity (ca. 1474). Wooden intarsia. Urbino, Palazzo Ducale, west wall of the studiolo of Federico da Montefeltro.*

IMAGE © SOPRINTENDENZA PER I BENI ARTISTICI E STORICI DELLE MARCHE.

Umbrian poet Lilius Tifernas, has no one other than the late Battista Sforza herself say that she had been called by Christ, 'to the stars'.<sup>55</sup>

The prominent role that the Theological Virtues played in Urbino is an expression of the duke's piousness, which is to say his 'search for God', in accordance with the demands that Petrarch cited for the *solitarius*. However, the virtues also fed into local patriotism. They relate to a former bishop of Urbino, whose books, by the way, could already be found in the library of duke Federico's great-grandfather Antonio da Montefeltro (1348–1404). This bishop was Petrarch's scholarly friend, the Augustinian hermit Bartolomeo Carusi (d. 1350) (better known as Bartolomeo da Urbino), who made the sensational rediscovery of two books by Augustine: in addition to *De musica* (*On Music*), the so-called *Enchiridion* about the Theological Virtues.<sup>56</sup> Whether or not the musical instruments (monochord, clavichord, pipes) visible in the intarsia work expound on *De musica* must remain unanswered, because motifs of this kind are hardly different from those encountered in choir stalls and sacristies (perhaps self-evident as silenced spirituality).<sup>57</sup> As the view towards the wooden inlays (begun in 1435) of the sacristy's cupboards in the Cathedral Santa Maria del Fiore at Florence shows, the same can be said for the illusionistic, sometimes opened, sometimes closed drawers and cabinets.<sup>58</sup> The animated activity that they most vividly suggest was undoubtedly intended to pictorially symbolise the intellectual activity of meditating, which was not only a duty of

55 For Filetico's poem, composed of 178 distichs, see Cinquini A., "Elegie latine di Martino Filetico", *Classici e Neolatini* 2 (1906) 222–230; for Tifernas: Ms. Urb. lat. 1193, fol. 110r; see Cinquini, *Il codice* 497 (in Greek and Latin). In light of these observations, the question remains whether the intarsia motto on the north wall: 'NON MAI' ('never again') (see Cheles, *The Studiolo* 83) should also be read against the background of duke of Urbino's mourning, although this motif, which appeared next to an ermine in illuminated manuscripts of the widower around 1474, is mostly understood as an expression of purity; see Simonetta, *Federico da Montefeltro and His Library* 85.

56 For further details, see Hessler C.J., *Zum Paragone: Malerei, Skulptur und Dichtung in der Rangstreitkultur des Quattrocento* (Berlin: 2014) 465–466; and Zafarana Z., s. v. 'Bartolomeo da Urbino', *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 6 (Rome: 1964) 779–780. In an influential passage of his *Tusculan Disputations* (3, 36), Cicero, who dealt with overcoming grief and consolation, referred to the virtues: a great power lay within them: and one should summon them if they had fallen into disuse.

57 On the music at Urbino, see Vespasiano da Bisticci, *Vite di uomini illustri*, vol. 1, 295.

58 For the intarsia of the south wall of the sacristy, made by Agnolo di Lazzaro and his collaborators from 1436–1440, see Haines M., *The "Sacrestia delle Messe" of the Florentine Cathedral* (Florence: 1983), colour plate 1.

a clergyman, but, according to Petrarch, also of the *solitarius*.<sup>59</sup> In my opinion, these sham furnishings, as well as the abundance of references to the five senses through their contents, call to mind Augustine's very picturesque descriptions of the inner chambers of memory (*Confessions*, x, 8, 11–13). Augustine states that 'the treasures of innumerable forms brought into it from these things that have been perceived by the senses be hoarded up', or more precisely, that it is not the 'things themselves', but rather 'only the images of the things'; they are 'ready there at hand, whenever the thoughts will recall them'.<sup>60</sup> Ultimately, for Augustine *memoria* was the place of self-knowledge and gnosis. Referring to an idea, later echoed in Petrarch's *De vita solitaria* (11, 4), which also brings to mind the above-mentioned portrait of Federico da Montefeltro in the intarsia [Fig. 12.6], Augustine wrote: 'There [...] meet I with myself' (x, 8, 14).<sup>61</sup>

### Dead Men Consoling?

What more do we know about the 'dialogue with the dead' in the duke's *studio-lo* following this outline of its general conditions? Clearly the duke's familiarity with what he had read promised him peace of mind, not only when he cast his gaze on the portraits of two personalities—Sixtus IV and Bessarion [Fig. 12.5], who sent him letters of sympathy in the summer of 1472—but also through a Stoic author's relevant writings on consolation, i.e. Seneca; he is depicted on

59 See the table of contents in Petrarch, *De vita solitaria* (ed. Enenkel) 673: s.v. "Meditation"; Pohemium, 5, 56 (ibidem) 57: '[...] quid primum prestare nitar, nisi ut, sicut ego a negotiis, sic ab oti meo procul absit inertia?' ('it is not to be my first aim to have my leisure as remote from idleness as my life is from active affairs?; cf. *The Life of Solitude* [ed. Zeitlin], 99).

60 Augustine, *Confessions* x, 8, 12: '[...] sunt thesauri innumerabilium imaginum de cuiuscemodi rebus sensis invectarum'; cf. *St Augustine's Confessions*, ed. W. Watts, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA: 1970), vol. 2, 92–93, 94–95; and ibidem x, 13, 96–97: 'nec ipsa [...] sed rerum sensarum imagines illic praesto sunt cogitationi reminiscentis eas'. Similar ideas in Landino, *Disputationes Camaldolenses* 1, 16. The idea of making associations between the inlay motifs in the Urbino *studiolo* reinforced mnemonic readings; see for instance the recommendations for *imagines* in treatises, such as the one by Giovanni Fontana, *Secretum de thesauro* (ca. 1430–1449); Battisti E. (ed.), *Le macchine cifrate di Giovanni Fontana* (Milan: 1984) 157: 'De libris et doctoribus. [...] Spera pro philoxopo/ Astrolabium pro astr<o>logo/ Circinus pro geometra' ('On books and learned men: [...] The globe for a philosopher/ The astrolabe for the astrologer/ A compass for a geometrician').

61 Cf. Augustine, *Confessions* x, 8, 14; 98–99. According to Petrarch, *De vita solitaria* 11, 4, it is difficult to find God in a crowd of people; one needs to be alone for the discovery of the self.

the left side of the east wall. The text that formerly accompanied the philosopher almost gives the duke an indirect self-portrait or aura of an intellectual architect, which, in fact, he also was with regard to the pantheon of chosen celebrities: 'To [...] Seneca [...], by whose precepts the spirit is freed from worries and calm, Federico erected [erexit] this'.<sup>62</sup> However, in the service of reassuring, comforting, and relaxation the other venerated *uomini famosi* could potentially be 'invoked' to conduct dialogues with him, for instance as *alter egos* or like kindred spirits, but also—and related to Christian precedents, so to speak—like saints or 'holy helpers' ('Nothelfer'); their elevated positions integrating them in the room is part of this tradition.<sup>63</sup> Such aims of the *vita contemplativa* and of meditation in solitude defined as 'quaedam exercitatio' were most extensively described by the humanist Cristoforo Landino (1425–ca. 1498) in his *Disputationes Camaldulenses* (*Camaldoiese Disputations*) (1472); the philosophical dialogue is dedicated to Federico d'Urbino.<sup>64</sup>

A strange parallel appearance to the Petrarchan conversations, for which the *solitarius* had the deceased famous men at the ready, are represented by several of the condolence poems that arrived at the court of Urbino in 1472, and were assembled in a transcription by the duke's librarian Federico Veterano. Lilius Tifernas was not the only one to give the late Battista Sforza her voice once again; the *Threnos panegyricos* (*Panegyric Threnos*), a lamentation by her former teacher, Martino Filetico, contains a dialogue between Battista and her surviving husband, in which she consoles him by describing her departure for a new and better life.<sup>65</sup> She soothes those left behind from the beyond, like a second Laura,

62 'Annaeo Sanecae Corduben[si] cuius praeceptis animus liberatur perturbationibus, excoliturq[ue] tranquillitas, Fed[ericus] erexit'; cf. Cheles, *The Studiolo* 93, no. 6; and fig. 18.

63 I wish to thank Walter S. Melion for bringing this aspect to my attention. In his famous letter to Francesco Vettori (10 December 1513), Machiavelli wrote on using books as consolation, when he described the exceptional aura of his study: 'I enter the ancient courts of ancient men, [...]. There I am not ashamed to speak with them [...]; and they in their humanity reply to me. [...] I forget every pain [...]; death does not frighten me'; for a detailed analysis, see Pieters, *Speaking with the Dead* 17–24, esp. 21. For considerations on the ideal place for recreation, see Petrarch, *De remediis* 1, chapter 86: "De serenitate aëris" ("On Clear Air"); see Petrarca Francesco, *De remediis utriusque fortunae* (Paris, Sébastien Nivelle: 1557) 274–275.

64 See Landino Cristoforo, *Disputationes Camaldulenses*, ed. P. Lohe (Florence: 1980) 1, 8 (on hermits and meditative retirement in the peace of the countryside, a recreation 'in [...] solitudine'); 11.

65 'Te solare, rogo: moriens, nunc vivere primum/ Incipio: [...] ('I ask you to console yourself: Dying, I now begin to live for the first time'); cf. Filetico, *Threnos* (Ms. Urb. lat. 373); see

much like Petrarch himself gave literary form to his beloved in the *Triumph of Death*.<sup>66</sup> A close look at the most important Renaissance dialogue on bereavement, Giannozzo Manetti's *Dialogus consolatorius* (*Consolatory Dialogue*) from 1438, reveals that Filetico was following an enduring literary genre; Manetti held a colloquy of divine entreaty with his late son Antonino.<sup>67</sup>

### The Power of Paintings: 'Faces of the Dead Go on Living'

And yet another nuance of communication comes into play: Petrarch never recommends anything other than the book to the *solitarius* as a medium for a spiritual *conversatio*—never the use of paintings or life-like portraits. On this point, Leon Battista Alberti—who had contact with Federico d'Urbino until his death in 1472—planted the seed with values that can be read in his above-mentioned treatise *On Painting*.<sup>68</sup> Of principal interest is the idea familiar from the classical *topos* of the bonding effect of letter writing, which Alberti transposed from epistolatory exchanges onto the genre of painting by asserting that painting, in particular, possesses an inherent potential comparable to friendship. That is to say, the more convincingly the portraits convey the likeness of their subjects, the more they engender a flourishing affective and communicative effect, which (like friendship) can be experienced as an everlasting bond that transcends geographical separations and even death.<sup>69</sup>

Cinquini, "Elegie latine" 222–230; and Peruzzi M. (ed.), *Ornatissimo codice: La biblioteca di Federico di Montefeltro*, exh. cat., Galleria Nazionale delle Marche, Urbino (Geneva – Milan: 2008) 204–208.

66 For more information, see note 72.

67 See McClure, *Sorrow and Consolation* 92–115; on this tradition, see Parenti, "L'invenzione di un genere" 125–158.

68 Alberti, who died 25 April 1472, had at first intended to dedicate his treatise *De re aedificatoria* to Federico d'Urbino; see Tavernor R., *On Alberti and the Art of Building* (New Haven, CT: 1998) 189–200.

69 Alberti, *On Painting* 11, 25 (see the quotation in note 4); and 11, 41–41 (on the affective potential of painting); see, on Alberti's idea of friendship, Langer, *Perfect Friendship* 189–211. In a dialogue of Petrarch it is written that a friend is always present through his words and deeds; see Petrarch, *De remediis* 11, chapter 53, 552: "De absentia amicorum" ("The Absence of Friends"): "[...] in dictis factisque suis omnibus fraternam sibi animo definixisse presentiam" ("[...] to imagine in all his words and deeds his brother would be at his side"); all of the English translations from Petrarch's *De remediis* are taken from Rawski's edition: see *Petrarch's Remedies for Fortune Fair and Foul*, ed. C.H. Rawski, 5 vols. (Bloomington, IN: 1991), vol. 3, 125); on *verisimilitude*, see Freedberg D., *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago, IL – London: 1991), *passim*.

Therefore, his dearest friend Bessarion *ad vivum* [Fig. 12.5] in the *studiolo* had a great impact on the duke's emotions, and certainly contributed to Bessarion's commemoration and to Montefeltro's consolation.<sup>70</sup> In place of the real, living presence of his friend, in the *studiolo* the duke had only a painted likeness at his side, but in keeping with the ambitions common to painters of that period, the portrait was as true to life and naturalistic 'as if it could speak'.<sup>71</sup> It is this *topos* of a work of art that seems to converse, which appears in a new light within the 'dialogues with the dead' that occur in *solitudo*.

The fact that a poem by Veronese Carmelite Giovanni Antonio Ferabos specifically praised Piero della Francesca (ca. 1415–1492) for having painted a portrait of Federico d'Urbino that speaks to the duke is one more reason why I would briefly like to recall my thesis, previously published in this context, that the duke's *studiolo* was the most probable site for Piero della Francesca's famous double-sided diptych comprised of the portraits of Federico da Montefeltro

<sup>70</sup> Petrarch himself did argue for the supremacy of sight over hearing, because what we see makes a sharper imprint on memory; see Petrarch, *De remediis* 1, chapter 30, 115: "De variis spectaculis" ("On Spectacles"): 'Multum mali auribus invehitur, sed multo plus oculis [...], nil potentius in memoriam descendit quod visu subit, facile audita praetervolant [...]'.—'Nothing affects your memory more intensely than what enters through your eyes. The words you hear do slip by easily. The images of things you see stay with you [...]: Cf. *Petrarch's Remedies* (ed. Rawski), vol. 1, 93.

<sup>71</sup> The illusion of being able to speak with learned men (*uomini illustri*) invalidated the criticism from Angelo Decembrio's *De politia litteraria* (6, chapter 68) that paintings do not really belong in studies, 'for he [one of the speakers] considered that they had nothing to do with reading and instruction'.—' [...] quod ad legendum uel edocendum hominem nihil pertinere arbitraretur'. See Baxandall M., "A Dialogue on Art from the Court of Leonello d'Este: Angelo Decembrio's 'De Politia Litteraria Pars LXVIII'", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 26 (1963) 304–326, 324–325. On speaking portraits, see Kris E. – Kurz O., *Die Legende vom Künstler: Ein geschichtlicher Versuch*, [Vienna, 1934] (Frankfurt am Main: 1979) 91, 95, 101; Cranston, *The Poetics of Portraiture* 3 and passim. In his dialogue on paintings, Petrarch (*De remediis* 1, 40, 152) had already asserted that lively portraiture of faces are capable of astonishing the beholder to such a degree that 'you would almost think they would speak to you': 'Sic exanguium vivi gestus, atque immobilium motus imaginum, et postibus erumpentes effigies, ac vultuum spirantium linimenti suspendunt, ut hinc erupturas paulo minus praestoleris voces, et est hac in re periculum, quod his magna maxime capiuntur ingenia'.—'And you are fascinated by the lifelike gestures, the movement in these inanimate and immobile pictures, the faces jutting out of posts, and the portraits that seem about to breathe and make you think that they might utter words'. Cf. *Petrarch's Remedies* (ed. Rawski), vol. 1, 126–127.

and [a posthumous!] Battista Sforza on the front panels [Fig. 12.8].<sup>72</sup> In much the same way that the correlations between the individual, always adjacent pairs of portraits in the *studiolo* were clearly linked together by overlapping and interconnecting backgrounds (which differ nearly in every pair), there is also continuity in the distant panoramic background landscapes in Piero della Francesca's portraits of the Montefeltro husband and wife. My reconstruction, which also takes in and integrates the painted reverse sides of both panels [Fig. 12.8], shows that this landscape stretches throughout—and practically around the entire diptych—into a 360-degree panorama; a device which the

<sup>72</sup> Ferabò's poem is also contained in Ms. Urb. lat. 1193, fols. 114r–v: 'Imago eiusdem Principis a Petro Burgensi/ picta alloquitur ipsum principem. [...] Vivo igitur. Loquor [...].—The portrait of the prince painted by Piero della Francesca addresses the prince himself. [...] Therefore, I live, and speak [...]. See Hessler, *Zum Paragone* 354, note 312; for a characterisation of Ferabòs, see Bolzoni, *Poesia e ritratto* 151. The arguments which substantiate my theory are quite numerous: 1. the coincidence in date, 2. the consolatory aspect, 3. the Petrarchan iconography, and 4. connections to traditions revolving around books and a *studiolo*. What follows are arguments supporting the aspects mentioned: 1. Piero's diptych of ca. 1472 was painted at almost the same time that the plans for the *studiolo* emerged; 2. Both the subject of the portrait scenes (i.e. the depicted reunion of the widower with his wife) and the Latin inscription dedicated to Battista Sforza, written in the past tense and a derivation from a famous epitaph (cf. Cicero, *Tusculanae disputationes* 1, 34), are expressions of mourning and consolation. (The inscription may be translated 'She, who retained modesty in good fortune, now flies through all the mouths of men'); 3. While the reverse sides of the portraits depict duke Federico and his wife (instead of Petrarch and Laura) in Petrarchan *Triumphs* (i.e. compact allusions to the first five earthly *Triumphs*)—and she is shown with Theological Virtues as attendants—the main portraits fuse together the scene of the temporary re-encounter between the loving couple in the second part of the *Triumph of Death* (see below) with the heavenly, eternal realm of the *Triumph of Eternity*. (It is really not surprising that the diptych was listed in the 1692 inventory of Poggio Imperiale as portraits of Laura and Petrarch; see Hessler, *Zum Paragone* 426, note 536); 4. Piero's small book-like diptych, which fits in well with the *studiolo*'s pictorial world of books, is a so-called "Privatporträt", an intimate family portrait, a type of commemoration often kept in *studioli*. For Luca Pacioli's account of Piero's close friendship with the 'studiolo artist' Lorenzo Canozi da Lendinara, who made the intarsia woodwork in the palace of Belfiore in 1449, see Pacioli Luca, *De divina proportione* (Venice, Paganino Paganini: 1509), fol. 23; cf. Bunker J., *Piero della Francesca: Artist and Man* (Oxford: 2014) 24, note 21. Creighton Gilbert (1968) was the first to propose that the portrait of Battista is posthumous; see Gilbert C., *Change in Piero della Francesca* (New York, NY: 1968) 29–32. The wider background is laid out in Hessler, *Zum Paragone* 370–475.



FIGURE 12.8  
*Piero della Francesca, Front and back of the diptych of Federico da Montefeltro and his wife Battista Sforza (ca. 1472–1474). Tempera on wood, 47 × 33 cm (each panel). Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi (inv. nos. 1890, 3342).*  
 IMAGE © GALLERIA DEGLI UFFIZI/STUDIO DECOUARD. PHOTOMONTAGE: CHRISTIANE HESSLER.

painter used to emphasise the work's compositional and thematic unity.<sup>73</sup> In accordance, as I have proposed, the portrait scenes of this diptych (and a related narrative sequence on the reverse showing Petrarchan *Trionfi* scenes) allude to Petrarch's dreamlike vision of a face-to-face conversation he experienced with his late beloved Laura, while fleetingly transported into heaven for her parting words to the one she must leave behind (i.e. the second part of the *Triumph of Death*).<sup>74</sup> It is yet another example of a virtual dialogue between a person who is deceased and the living. Remarkably, in Decembrio's dialogue mentioned above in the context of libraries, the talk is of a commemorative portrait of a young 'golden-haired maiden' from Ferrara, who has died. One of the speakers proudly refers to the portrait, which he keeps in a small pyxis. 'Not long ago I wrote a tearful elegy on her death', we are told, 'and now I treasure this proof of [...] remembrance: nothing, it seems, is lacking in it but her voice'.<sup>75</sup> The painters' ambitions to evoke even the voices of those portrayed can be recognised at the court of Urbino ten years later.

### Conclusion

The particular conditions of its origins, which make the *studio* in Urbino into a special case within the history of this type of room, led to a series of distinctive features. First—particularly with regard to the aspired 'conversations with sublime spirits of the past'—it can be asserted that there was probably not

73 The reconstruction of the panorama illustrated here is shown in its simplest form. It underlies a well-planned construct and design, because the parts also match together in another sequence. For another arrangement in which the fronts of the panels alternate with the versos, see Hessler, *Zum Paragone* 267, fig. 1.

74 For this episode, see Petrarch, *Trionfi* III, 2, 1–190; esp. 21–22: 'Dimmi pur, prego, s'tu se'morta o viva! Viva son io e tu se'morto ancora' ('Tell me, I pray, are you in life or in death? I am in life, and you are still in death'), cf. Petrarcha Francesco, *Rime, Trionfi e Poesie Latine*, ed. F. Neri – G. Martelotti – E. Bianchi – N. Sapegno (Milan – Naples: 1951) 524. In this scene, rarely depicted in cycles, the bereaved Petrarch dreams that he is temporarily transported to heaven on the night when Laura died, where he sees her 'face to face'; for the iconography, see Trapp J.B., "The Iconography of Petrarch in the Age of Humanism", in *Il Petrarca Latino e le origini dell'umanesimo*, Quaderni Petrarcheschi 9–10, 2 vols. (Florence: 1996), vol. 1, 11–73, figs. 33–34; and Hessler, *Zum Paragone* 393–415, figs. 74–76.

75 Baxandall, "A Dialogue on Art" 325–326: 'sed ex ferrariensium puellarum nouis insignibus uultum habeo uirginis minima compactum in pyxide aurea coma. pro cuius nuper interitu. cum lacrymabile carmen excludsem. Hoc quoque teneo perpetuae dulcisque memoriae testimonium in quo nihil uidetur praeter uocem deesse'.

another *studiolo* in the entire Renaissance period that exhibited such a close and consistent orientation to Petrarch's *De vita solitaria* as that at the court of Urbino. The sincere *imitatio* of the poet, whose own premise seems to have been founded on a parallel fate (i.e. mourning over his beloved), suggests that perhaps a man of letters with a passionate penchant for Petrarch assisted the duke in an advisory capacity, as an intellectual consultant; he was not necessarily a member of the duke's entourage.<sup>76</sup> Incidentally, when the Montefeltro duke sat alone meditating in his *studiolo*, his own bearing is likely to have reflected a pose quite reminiscent of *Petrarch in His Study*, as seen, for example, in the well-known fresco of the Sala dei Giganti in Padua [Fig. 12.9].<sup>77</sup>

Second, the room concept was especially tailored to someone in mourning, or more specifically: tailored to a stage in the life of the individual whose yearning for a tangible form of solitary life, characterised by the efforts of being a self-consoler, can be recognised. It points out an apparent paradox, and one that was not so drastic in Petrarch's case: namely, that the aim of retreating into

76 For this role we might perhaps consider Federico Veterano, who had been in the duke's employ since ca. 1470; but hardly Vespasiano da Bisticci, who certainly would have mentioned this in his biography of the Montefeltro duke. I would like to propose the Milan humanist Francesco Filelfo (1398–1481), who likely did more than just write a condolence letter to the duke in 1472; see Filelfo Francesco, *Epistolarum familiarum libri XXXVIII* (Venice, Giovanni Gregori: 1502), fols. 251r–251v. Filelfo, a scholar of distinguished abilities, was very familiar with Petrarch. He is the author of the most important commentary on Petrarch's *Canzoniere* (*Petrarcha con doi commenti sopra li sonetti et canzone [...]*); see Raimondi E., “Francesco Filelfo interprete del Canzoniere”, *Studi Petrarcheschi* 3 (1950) 143–164. And in 1461, he wrote the most extensive printed (1475) Italian *consolatio* of the fifteenth century (*Oratio consolatoria ad Iacobum Antonium Marcellum de obitu Valerii filii*); see McClure, *Sorrow and Consolation* 105. Furthermore he worked on a biography about Federico d'Urbino (Ms. Vat. Urb. lat. 1022); see Filelfo Francesco, *Commentarii della vita e delle imprese di Federico da Montefeltro*, Atti e memorie della R. Deput. st. Patria per le Province delle Marche, 5, 1901, ed. G. Zannoni (Tolentino: 1901) 263–420; and Greco A., “Filelfo e Federico da Montefeltro”, in *Francesco Filelfo nel quinto centenario della morte*, Atti del xvii Convegno di Studi Maceratesi (Padua: 1986) 495–514. Filelfo was also concerned with the subject of solitude; in his philosophical dialogue on exile, we are told that philosophy provides ‘consolation and relief for adverse and troublesome ones’. For Filelfo, the intellect ‘is a kind of speech of mind by which it speaks to itself’, and ‘exiles hold nothing safer than silence for their peace of mind and rest’; see Filelfo Francesco, *On Exile*, ed J. De Keyser (Cambridge, MA: 2013) 3, 39, 47.

77 For the famous fresco “Petrarch in His Study” (ca. 1367–1479) in the “Sala Virorum Illustrum” in Padua, once attributed to Altichiero, see Trapp, “The Iconography of Petrarch” 19, fig. iv.



FIGURE 12.9

Anon. artist (Altichiero?), Petrarch in His Study, painted for the 'Sala dei Virorum Illustrium' (or 'Sala dei Giganti') (1367–1379). Fresco. Siena, Palazzo Carrara.

IMAGE © SOPRINTENDENZA PER I BENI STORICI, ARTISTICI PER LE PROVINCE DI VENEZIA, BELLUNO, PADOVA E TREVISO.

*solitudo* was intended to be ‘in companionship’, but, it should be remembered in the company—they are indeed chosen, but deceased interlocutors—of those who were only virtually available through one’s own imagination, made manifest and ‘brought to life’ by the power of image-based meditation. It was the *studiolo*’s owner’s *familiaritas* with their words and deeds that encouraged these men ‘to speak’. Through this kind of escape from reality, the *studiolo* in Urbino proved itself to be a place where preferred solitude was intentionally meant to overcome real solitude. Such wishful thinking by the erudite *solitarius* had already latently appeared in a famous dictum by Scipio, and it seems significant that it could be read at the beginning of the sixteenth century in one of the most private *Camerini* of Alfonso I d’Este: ‘Never less alone than when in solitude’.<sup>78</sup>

The third striking observation about Federico da Montefeltro’s *studiolo* is that the wall decoration approaches an autobiographical confession, in which the owner presents his ‘inner world’ to the outside for purposes of self-portrayal, projected onto his ‘own four walls’, for his own contemplation. In such a way, the portraits, hung on the walls in compensation, revealed the duke’s own longings. They are comparable, for instance, with the depictions on the prison walls of Lancelot [Fig. 12.10], who, forced into unbearable loneliness, and although no artist, had painted his love story with his absent beloved, with Guinevere. The *Prose Lancelot* tells us this was done to comfort and console himself (i.e. as a ‘grant alegement de ses maux’) or ‘to lighten his load’.<sup>79</sup>

78 A relief of Antonio Lombardo bears the Latin inscription: ‘nec minus solum quam cum solus esset’; see Campbell, *The Cabinet of Eros* 255; cf. Cicero, *De officiis* III, 1, 1; and Petrarch, *De vita solitaria* 11, 13, 552, 10–11; idem, *Rerum memorandum* I, 2,1; and Enea Silvio Piccolomini, *De curialium miseriis* (1444); see *Aenea Sylvii Piccolominei Senesis* [...] *operibus collecta* (Basel, Caesar Maiest.: 1571) 735.

79 In the *Prose Lancelot* (thirteenth century), Lancelot was imprisoned for a long time at the castle of Queen Morgan le Fay; see *Lancelot*, ed. A. Micha, 9 vols. (Paris – Geneva: 1980), vol. 5, 86, 20–21; 52: ‘Lors se porpense que se la chambre ou il gisoit estoit portraite de ses faiz et de ses diz, moult li plairoit a veoir les biaux contenemenz de sa dame et moult li seroit grant alegement de ses maux’ (author’s emphasis). For the French illustration of ca. 1470 (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Fr. 112(3), fol. 193v), “King Arthur Discovers Lancelot’s Paintings in the Prison Cell”, see Stones A., “Images of Temptation, Seduction and Discovery in the Prose Lancelot: A Preliminary Note”, *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 46–47 (1993–1994) 725–735, 885, fig. 1; and Wenzel, *Hören und Sehen* 303–304, fig. ix.



FIGURE 12.10 Workshop of Evrard d'Espinques, "King Arthur Discovers Lancelot's Paintings in the Prison Cell", in *Lancelot du Lac* (compilation of various Arthurian romances, manuscript, written by Micheau Gonnöt, Nemours, ca. 1470) fol. 193v. Miniature on parchment, 43 x 30 cm (page). Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France (Ms. fr. 112(3)).

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## Sociable Solitude: The Early Modern Hermitage as Proto-Museum\*

*Arnold A. Witte*

In 1842, the German travel writer and geographer Johann Georg Kohl visited the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg—which had been expanded considerably with the addition of the New and Great Hermitage buildings since its foundation in the 1760s by Catherine the Great (1729–1796). The remarkable description he gave of it in his guide to St. Petersburg related the name of the institution to its contents:

[...] daß ein Eremit immer dreist der übrigen Welt entsagen könnte, wenn er sich mit dem Mikrokosmus der Petersburger Eremitage klausnerisch verschließen könnte, wo die halbe Natur- und Menschenwelt sich ihm auf Leinwand, in Farbe, Marmor, Glas und Elfenbein, gemalt, gemeißelt, gedruckt, gewebt, und gefeilt darbietet.<sup>1</sup>

One might assume that Kohl was merely using a playful literary conceit to solve the apparent contradiction between the act of reclusion and the worldly pleasures of art, but his description actually suggests an awareness of a function of the Hermitage that was lost on most nineteenth-century observers, let alone the modern visitor.

Instead of an oxymoron, the Hermitage in St. Petersburg is only seemingly a paradox of secular versus religious culture, and public versus private space. This paradox forms the basis of the museum as a modern institution; the ‘solitary’ behaviour of its visitors in a public sphere has remained one of the key

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<sup>1</sup> Kohl J.G., *Petersburg in Bildern und Skizzen* (Dresden – Leipzig: 1841), vol. 1, 261: ‘A hermit might boldly renounce all the rest of the world if he could shut himself up in the microcosm of the Petersburg Hermitage, where half the natural and man-made world presents itself before him on canvas, in colours, in marble, glass, and ivory, painted, chiselled, printed, woven, and filed’.

concepts of the etiquette that governs museums to the present day. The common roots of this particular combination of space and ceremony in late eighteenth-century Russia can be traced to Italian sixteenth-century courtly society, where two other concepts dating even further back—the classical *diaeta*, as part of villa culture, and the medieval, monastic place of solitary religious retreat—were developed, conflating in the seventeenth century into one building type that was often indicated by the term “hermitage” (*romitorio* in Italian, *ermitage* in French and *Eremitage* in German).<sup>2</sup> During the eighteenth century, this space was subsequently developed in several European countries into the private proto-museum—a semi-public location designed to house an encyclopaedic collection of art and natural objects. Simultaneously, the antecedents of the hermitage—places for private prayer in seclusion—were gradually transformed into a location for sociable activities, *in primis* the discussion of the arts and sciences, where “solitary” study of objects alternated with polite conversation.

This social process, which is documented best in Rome but which was by far not restricted to this city, left traces in the act of attentiveness towards or contemplation of *artificialia* and *naturalia* which remains a feature of how visitors to most museums behave today. It also affected the two interrelated ways in which we behold an artwork—both as something referring to a historical and thus distant moment, while at the same time as self-referential, constituting an everlasting here and now. When the hitherto forgotten double root of modern museum culture in the early modern hermitage is considered, an alternative narrative of the history of the institution becomes visible, in which the concept of sociable solitude is key to its understanding.

### The Plinian *diaeta*

The roots of the early modern museum can be traced back to antiquity—and not merely in the etymological sense of the word.<sup>3</sup> In many respects, the

<sup>2</sup> Hager L., “Eremitage”, in Schmidt O. – Gall E. – Heydenreich L. (eds.), *Reallexikon zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte* (Stuttgart: 1967), vol. 5, 1203–1229; Horsch N., “Ottium religiosum: Die Garteneremitage im Barchetto von Pesaro als christlich konnotierter Rückzugsort”, in Schweizer S. (ed.), *Gärten und Parks als Lebens- und Erlebnisraum: Sozialgeschichtliche Aspekte der Gartenkunst in früher Neuzeit und Moderne* (Worms: 2008) 65–80, and Campbell G., *The Hermit in the Garden: From Imperial Rome to Ornamental Gnome* (Oxford: 2013).

<sup>3</sup> Findlen P., “The Museum: Its Classical Etymology and Its Renaissance Genealogy”, *Journal for the History of Collections* 1, 1 (1989) 59–78.

nascent concept of the museum can be related to the revival of classical villa culture and the spatial concept of the *diaeta*. As can be read in the *Letters* of Pliny the Younger (61–113), his Laurentine villa contained two spaces to which he applied this term. The first, he described as a small apartment located in two turrets:

Here is a second story, with two rooms below and two above, as well as a dining room which commands the whole expanse of sea and stretch of shore with all its lovely houses.<sup>4</sup>

The second *diaeta* was located at ground floor level and was linked to the main body of the villa by means of a cryptoporticus running along a garden. It consisted of three rooms and a terrace. Pliny extensively described the architecture of this annex:

Here begins a covered arcade, nearly as large as a public building. It has windows on both sides, but more facing the sea, as there is one in each alternate bay on the garden side. [...] In front is a terrace scented with violets [...] At the far end of the terrace, the arcade and the garden is a suite of rooms [*diaeta*], which are really and truly my favourites, for I had them built myself. Here is a sun-parlour facing the terrace on one side, the sea on the other, and the sun on both. There is also a bedroom that has folding doors opening onto the arcade and a window looking out on the sea. Opposite the intervening wall is a beautifully designed alcove [...] it is large enough to hold a couch and two armchairs, and has the sea at its foot, the neighbouring villas behind, and the woods beyond, views which can be seen separately from its many windows or blended into one.<sup>5</sup>

His second villa, at Tusculum, contained another such dwelling, in that instance a separate garden pavilion with a bedroom and dining room, in front of which was a fountain providing cool water and soothing sounds.<sup>6</sup>

4 Pliny the Younger, *Letters and Panegyrics* (London – Cambridge: 1972), vol. 1, 137 (Book II.17, 12–13).

5 Ibidem 139–141 (Book II, 17, 16–22).

6 Ibidem 343–345 (Book V, 6, 21–24): ‘Almost opposite the centre of the portico, and rather to the back, stands a summer-house (*diaeta*) enclosing a small area shaded by four plane-trees, in the midst of which rises a marble fountain which gently plays upon the roots of the plane-trees and upon the grass-plots underneath them. This summer-house has a bedroom

The word used by Pliny the Younger to denote these pavilions, *diaeta*, was derived from the Greek δίαιτα, which literally meant 'dwelling'.<sup>7</sup> This could be either a separate architectural addition to the main building of a villa or a suite of rooms located in an isolated part of the building. It provided its inhabitant with solitude and isolation and was thus a place for repose. More specifically, it was intended for concentration and study—mainly of texts, it seems, so different from the later *studiolo*; Pliny the Younger used it for writing. Pliny describes the function of the ground floor addition to the Laurentine *diaeta* in the following words:

This profound peace and seclusion is due to the dividing passage which runs between the room and the garden so that any noise is lost in the intervening space [...] When I retire to this suite I feel as if I have left my house altogether and much enjoy the sensation: especially during the Saturnalia when the rest of the roof resounds with festive cries in the holiday freedom, for I am not disturbing my household's merrymaking nor they my work.<sup>8</sup>

Pliny regarded the Laurentine villa as an extension to his townhouse: 'It is seventeen miles from Rome, so that it is possible to spend the night there after necessary business is done, without having cut short or hurried the day's work [...].'<sup>9</sup> This proximity of the villa to Rome was paralleled by the closeness of the *diaeta* to the building itself; the function of the entire complex could be summarised as offering its owner suburban solitude.

### Plinian Traditions in Renaissance Villa Culture

Pliny's concept began to be adopted around 1500, particularly in the context of the papal court in Rome. This also had an impact on the terminology used to describe the various parts of the Renaissance villa, which was consciously derived from Pliny's *Letters*.<sup>10</sup> The word 'diaeta' was used a number of times

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in it free from every sort of noise, and which the light itself cannot penetrate, together with a common dining-room I use when I have none but intimate friends with me'.

<sup>7</sup> Wissowa G. (ed.), *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, vol. 5 (Stuttgart: 1905) 307–308.

<sup>8</sup> Pliny the Younger, *Letters* 141–143 (Book 11, 17, 22–24).

<sup>9</sup> Ibidem 133 (Book 11, 17, 2).

<sup>10</sup> Ranaldi A., *Pirro Ligorio e l'interpretazione delle villa antiche* (Rome: 2001) 55–65.

in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Italian texts and inscriptions. An early instance of the use of the word is in the *Vocabularius Breviloquus (Concise Dictionary)* of Guarino da Verona—the first printed edition of which appeared in 1471—where it is defined as ‘*Dieta etiam dicitur cenaculum, quo die magis quam nocte solent homines residere [...]*’.<sup>11</sup> Guarino’s reference to the term was connected to the fact that he had discovered a complete text of Pliny’s *Letters* in the library of the Veronese Cathedral chapter in 1419.<sup>12</sup> Later editions of the *Letters* also discussed the particulars of the *diaeta* and its possible functions; the 1669 edition, published by Johannes Veenhuizen, combined the original text with a number of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century commentaries, and stated in a note on the letter on the Laurentine villa that in the *diaeta* ‘dinner could be served during the day’<sup>13</sup>—connecting the term to the word *dies*—and mentioning that it was a part of the house which often contained both a dining room and a *cubiculum* or sleeping room.<sup>14</sup>

The architect and antiquarian Pirro Ligorio (1513–1583) was the first to present these literary discussions with real architectural remains.<sup>15</sup> In his *Descrittione della superba e magnificentissima villa Tiburtina Hadriana (Description of the Superb and Magnificent Villa Hadriana at Tivoli)*, penned between 1550 and 1568, the Italianised word *diete* is used a number of times for apartments in the complex of the imperial villa that were used for the study of the arts as a leisure activity. All the Plinian typological elements recurred here: the connection to, or access through, *loggie* or *cryptoportici*, the proximity to either the

<sup>11</sup> Guarino da Verona, *Vocabularius breviloquus, cum arte diptongandi, punctandi et accentuandi* (Strasbourg, Johann Prüss [?]: 1501), s.p.: ‘A small dining room where people sit down for daytime dinner and even more often for evening dinner is called *dieta* [...].’

<sup>12</sup> Ruffinière du Prey P. de la, *The Villas of Pliny: From Antiquity to Posterity* (Chicago, IL – London: 1994) 40.

<sup>13</sup> Veenhusius Johannes (ed.), *Plinii Caecili Secundi Epistolarum Libri X notis integris Is[aaci] Casauboni, Jani Gruteri, H[enrici] Stephani, Augusti Buchneri, Cas[ari]. Barthii, Johannis Fred[erici] Gronovii [...]* (Rotterdam, Petrus Hackius: 1669) 133–134: ‘*diaeta* locus erat, in quo per diem versari solebant [...].’—‘*diaeta* was the place where they used to dwell during the day’.

<sup>14</sup> Ibidem 295–296, note 4: ‘Est autem *zeta* vel *diaeta* aedificium vel membrum domus, coenationem et cubiculum habens’.—‘Also the *zeta* or *diaeta* is a building or an addition to a house, which contains a dining room and a bedroom’.

<sup>15</sup> Coffin D., *The Villa in the Life of Renaissance Rome* (Princeton, NJ: 1979) 241–242; for Pirro Ligorio and his excavations at Villa Adriana in Tivoli, see Ranaldi, *Pirro Ligorio* 46–50 and 160, and 106–109 for Ligorio’s reconstructions of the complex. For the excavation history of Hadrian’s Villa at Tivoli, see McDonald W. – Pinto J.A., *Hadrian’s Villa and Its Legacy* (New Haven, CT – London: 1995).

countryside or private courtyards and gardens, and the vicinity of a library.<sup>16</sup> Finally, the *diaeta* was also deemed to be the perfect dwelling for *accademici*, offering the ideal context for learned conversation, as well as for the private enjoyment of the arts.<sup>17</sup> In 1615, Vincenzo Scamozzi published in his *L'idea della architettura universale* (*The Idea of Universal Architecture*), an architectural reconstruction of the Villa Laurentina, based on the Plinian text in which he also mentioned the *diaeta*.<sup>18</sup> Scamozzi supposed that it was located in a tower: 'Ad alto, e nel mezzo era una torre, nel quale erano le diette [sic]; cioè luoghi da veggiare, e altri luoghi da riposare, e perche havevano lume da più parte, però erano in gran silentio, e di bellissime viste del mare, e delle ville'.<sup>19</sup>

Through the adoption of the ideas of Pliny and other classical authors, the interrelated concepts of solitude and dedication to study became part and parcel of villa culture in the early Renaissance.<sup>20</sup> This was reflected in architectural design and in literary manifestations of this tradition. Petrarch (1304–1374) established models for both with the descriptions of his own villas in the Vaucluse and at Arquà, where, inspired by both classical and Christian sources, he consciously evoked the retreat from the court as a prerequisite for literary activities.<sup>21</sup> This was fused with the Plinian type by Erasmus in his literary dialogue *Convivium Religiosum* (*The Godly Feast*) of 1522, where he described the suburban dwelling of his main character Eusebius as a place of virtue isolated

<sup>16</sup> Ligorio Pirro, "Descrittione della superba e magnificenterissima Villa Tiburtina Hadriana", in *Thesaurus antiquitatum et historiarum Italiae, Etruria, Umbriae, Sabinorum et Latii*, vol. 8.4, ed. Johannes Graevius (Leiden, Pieter van der Aa: 1723) 1–32, esp. 11.

<sup>17</sup> Ibidem 19.

<sup>18</sup> Ruffinière du Prey, *The Villas of Pliny* 5.

<sup>19</sup> Scamozzi Vincenzo, *L'idea della architettura universale* (Venice, Vincenzo Scamozzi: 1615), vol. 1, 267: 'On top, and in the centre was a tower, in which the *diaetae* were; that is a place for concentration, and other places for rest, because they have light from every angle, but are in complete silence, and with beautiful vistas over the sea, and over the villas'.

<sup>20</sup> Coffin, *The Villa* 9–30; Keller F.E., *Zum Villenleben und Villenbau am Römischen Hof der Farnese* (Berlin: 1980); and Ackerman J.S., *The Villa: Form and Ideology of Country Houses* (London: 1990) 13 and 112.

<sup>21</sup> Cellauro L., "Landscape and Iconography: Petrarch's Country Houses and Gardens at Vaucluse and at Arquà", in *Die Gartenkunst* 21 (2009) 143–151, esp. 143–145; for Petrarch's villa in Arqua, see Bellinati C. – Fontana L., *Arquà e la casa di Francesco Petrarca: Con guida breve e itinerari sui Colli Euganei* (Padua: 1988) and Blason M. – Gallo D., *Franciscus: Francesco Petrarca ad Arqua* (Padua: 1990). For the literary and philosophical aspects see Enenkel K., *De vita solitaria, Buch I: Kritische Textausgabe und ideengeschichtlicher Kommentar* (Leiden: 1990) and Lee A., *Petrarch and St. Augustine: Classical Scholarship, Christian Theology and the Origins of Renaissance Italy* (Leiden: 2012) 159–228.

from depraved urban society.<sup>22</sup> Erasmus described this villa as containing a suite of rooms on the first floor, one of which was designated a library, adjacent to which were *cubicula* for resting and a *museion* with an encyclopaedic collection of objects. Erasmus had the owner Eusebius explain to his guests that this ensemble of spaces had been specially designed for the purposes of study and seclusion.<sup>23</sup>

The Erasmian ideal alluded to the relationship between the *otium* of the villa retreat and religious seclusion in the form of *vita contemplativa*, which became a literary motif from the sixteenth century onwards. Because the patrons of early modern villas and *diaetae* were predominantly senior churchmen, and because of their increasing need to retreat for purposes of meditation and contemplation after the Council of Trent, the classical concept of the villa became fused with that of the medieval hermitage. After all, both possessed similar characteristics and served a comparable goal—solitude.

This conflation of villa with hermitage, both being sites of social seclusion, was twofold: villas might be likened to cloisters, and monasteries could in some cases function as villas. In a letter of 18 November 1544, the poet, courtier and secretary Annibale Caro actually compared the villa to the monk's cell or the hermitage, stating that here one could retreat with dignity into solitude without entering a religious order:

E quando pure siete risoluto che la solitudine sia incitamento o nodrimento di questa tranquillità, non potete voi esser solitario senza esser frate? Soggiugnerete: Che? volete, ch'io sia romito? Né romito, né frate voglio che siate, ma uomo, e uomo da bene, amico di Dio, ritirato prima in voi stesso, che sarà il più bel eremo che possiate trovare, di poi per

<sup>22</sup> Rebhorn W., "Erasmian Education and the 'Convivium Religiosum'", *Studies in Philology* 69, 2 (1972) 131–147, esp. 144.

<sup>23</sup> Erasmus Desiderius, *Colloquies*, trans. C.R. Thompson, The Collected Works of Erasmus 39 (Toronto – Buffalo, NY – London: 1997) 205–206: 'Eusebius: Adiunctum est bibliothecae museion quoddam angustum, sed elegans, quod submota tabula ostendit foculum, si quid offerendit frigus. In estate videtur solidus paries. [...] Nunc adeamus illa tria ambulacra, quae imminent iis, quae vidistis ad hortum domesticum spectantia [...] In vtroque cornu prominet pensile cubiculum, vbi liceat interquiescere et vnde spectare licet pomarium et auiculas nostras'.—'Eusebius: Adjoining the library is a study [the Latin text has the word *museion*] narrow but elegant. When the board's removed you see a small hearth to use if you're cold. In summer it seems a solid wall. [...] Now let's go on to those three galleries you saw, facing the inner garden. [...] At each end a small chamber juts out; here one can rest and from it see the orchard and my little birds'. Erasmus did not use the word *diaeta* itself.

appartarvi dagli uomini ridotto in qualche villa con i vostri libri, con i vostri passatempi onesti, d'esercizi, di caccie, di pescagioni, di agricoltura, in un ozio con dignità, in una religione senza ipocrisia [...]<sup>24</sup>

The other option, the monastery as an alternative to *villeggiatura*, can be observed in the life and writings of the Venetian nobleman Paolo Giustiniani. Together with a group of friends from the Venetian nobility—the so-called “Circolo di Murano”, whom he received in his retreat at the ‘remote’ island of Murano, where they held academic discussions—he idealised the hermit’s life while merging it with the humanistic tradition.<sup>25</sup> This is evidenced in writings such as his 1506 *Cogitationes quotidianae de amore Dei* (*Daily Thoughts on the Love of God*), a spiritual diary of philosophical musings and solitary prayers, heavily influenced by Petrarchan models.<sup>26</sup> It later manifested itself in real retreats: Giustiniani first withdrew from the mundane world at Camaldoli, the main convent of the Camaldolesi order, located on a hilltop near Arezzo, where he took monastic vows. Later, he founded a new community at Montecorona dedicated entirely to spiritual reclusion.<sup>27</sup>

Typical for Giustiniani and his companions was the search for a type of solitude in which the study of classical literature was combined with the reading of spiritual texts and patristic sources. This was recognised in an eighteenth-century biography that stated that Giustiniani was one of the most important *letterati* of his century, and ‘imperocchè da quanto egli ha donato alla

<sup>24</sup> Caro Annibal, *Lettere familiari*, ed. A. Greco (Florence: 1957), vol. 1, 319: ‘And if you are convinced that solitude is an incitement to or nourishment for this tranquillity of the soul, could you not be a solitary without being a monk? You might add: What? Do you want me to become a hermit? No, I do not want you to become either a monk or a hermit, but a man, a good man, a friend of God, retreated first of all into yourselves, which will be the most beautiful hermitage that you can possibly find, so as to separate yourself from other men in some villa with your books, your honest pastimes, exercises, hunting, fishing, farming, in dignified leisure, in a religion without hypocrisy [...].’ See also Keller, *Zum Villenleben* 11.

<sup>25</sup> Fragnito G., *In museo e in villa: Saggi sul Rinascimento perduto* (Venice: 1988) 12–13.

<sup>26</sup> Fortini L., “Un umanista mistico e la corte di Roma: Paolo Giustiniani, ‘uomo tragico’ del primo Cinquecento”, in Fortini L. (ed.), *Un’idea di Roma: Società, arte e cultura tra Umanesimo e Rinascimento* (Rome: 1993) 143–166, esp. 148 and Massa E., “Le *Cogitationes quotidianae* di Paolo Giustiniani: problemi di mentalità, di cronologia e di struttura”, in *Studi latini e italiani in memoria di Arcellio Aurigemma* (Rome: 1997) 46–139.

<sup>27</sup> Massa E., *L’eremo, la Bibbia e il Medioevo in Umanisti veneti del primo Cinquecento* (Naples: 1992) and Bowd S.D., *Reform before the Reformation: Vincenzo Querini and the Religious Renaissance in Italy* (Leiden: 2002).

Repubblica letteraria, come parto del suo ingegno, spirando esso Erudizione, Dottrina, e Pietà, si fanno a meraviglia conoscere i lumi vivissimi del suo spirito Anacoretico'.<sup>28</sup> In sum, he was portrayed as an erudite hermit whose ample literary production was the result of his retreat from the world, as a sixteenth-century Petrarch.

In response to the literary and antiquarian recreations of the *diaeta* described above, the concept was turned into real architecture, and came to include other parts of the villa. This, moreover, allowed for variations in function, in line with the diverse options provided in Pliny's texts. The concept was first expanded to include locations for the display of collections, especially antiquities. For instance, the dedicatory inscription dated 1500 placed above the entrance of the statuary court of Cardinal Giuliano Cesarini described the place as 'dietam hanc statuariam studiis suis et gentilium suorum voluptati honestae dicavit'.<sup>29</sup> Cesarini's courtyard or garden is often considered the earliest coherent display of antique statues in Rome, and a model for the display of many later collections.<sup>30</sup> It remains unclear, however, whether the term *diaeta* here merely indicated an outside space, a pavilion constructed *in* that garden, or the garden plus adjacent rooms, all three of which were described around 1550 by Ulisse Aldrovandi.<sup>31</sup>

28 Romano Fiori Agostino, *Vita del B. Paolo Giustiniani* (Rome, Antonio de' Rossi: 1729) 430: '[...] inasmuch as he gave to the Republic of Letters, as part of his genius through which transpire erudition, doctrine and piety, one is surprised to learn about the bright lights of his anchorite spirit [...].'

29 'a statuary pavilion (dietam statuariam) dedicated to his studies and to the decorous pleasure of his countrymen'. See Lanciani R., *Storia degli scavi di Roma e notizie intorno le collezioni Romane di antichità* (Rome: 1902), vol. 1, 133 for the inscription and Coffin D.R., *Gardens and Gardening in Papal Rome* (Princeton, NJ: 1981) 18 and 24 for a discussion of this inscription and the garden. Coffin also provides a schematic reconstruction of the Cesarini sculpture garden west of San Pietro in Vincoli, where a separate pavilion was also constructed in the garden for the display of antique sculpture.

30 Hülsen C., *Römische Antikengärten des XVI Jahrhunderts* (Heidelberg: 1917) 6.

31 See the description of the Cesarini collection by Ulisse Aldrovandi in Mauro Lucio, *Le antichità della città di Roma breuissimamente raccolte da chiunque hà scritto, o antico, o moderno* (Venice, Giordano Ziletti: 1562) 221–224. Palazzo Cesarini was demolished in the nineteenth century and descriptions of the collections of antiquities refer to the objects and not their disposition. Early modern maps of Rome, such as those of Tempesta and Maggi, provide no further details on the premises of the Cesarini palace; most scholars take it to be a pavilion and thus some kind of architectural protection for the statues; see Brugnoli M.V., *Dal privato al pubblico: Note sul collezionismo d'arte e di antichità dall'antico al sec. XVIII* (Rome: 2010) 47–48.

A second architectural project for a *diaeta* described by that very term was proposed by Raphael for the Villa Madama in Rome, begun in 1518.<sup>32</sup> His plans actually contained two *diaetae* inspired by Pliny: one for summer use and another for winter. The latter was situated in a tower on the east side of the building, directly accessible from the main apartment; the former comprised a room at ground floor level with a central fountain in an *exedra* off a garden loggia.<sup>33</sup> What is not present in the Villa Madama case is the reference to literary activities—although these could very well have been envisioned in these spaces—or the presence of collections. Raphael described this project to his patron, Giuliano de'Medici, later elected Clement VII (1523–1534), with reference to Pliny's *Letters*, explaining the use of this kind of apartment for polite conversation: 'Ragionare co[n] Gentilhominj che luso sol dare la dietha'.<sup>34</sup>

Additional structures built in early modern Rome can be identified as *diaetae*, and these show the fluid boundaries between this spatial concept and the general idea of the villa. Between 1557 and 1564, Pope Pius IV had a Casino built in the Vatican Gardens.<sup>35</sup> The combination of architectural elements—an oval courtyard with central fountain providing access to a small dwelling containing a gallery, a private dining room, and several loggias—has been interpreted as a classical 'villa' in itself or as an entirely novel concept [Fig. 13.1]. We have to take into account here that the Casino was a mere pavilion located a short distance from the Vatican palace and, as the architect of the Casino was Pirro Ligorio, a particular connection can be established between it, the Villa Hadriana, and the concept of the *diaeta*. It has been argued that the various elements of the complex were recreations of the *musaeum*, the *accademia*, and the *coenatio*.<sup>36</sup> These functions all formed part of the early modern concept of

<sup>32</sup> Coffin D.R., "The Plans of the Villa Madama", *Art Bulletin* 49 (1967) 111–122, esp. 119–120; Coffin, *The Villa* 248–256; Jung W., *Über szenographisches Entwerfen: Raffael und die Villa Madama* (Brunswick: 1997).

<sup>33</sup> Coffin, *The Villa* 247 and Ranaldi, *Pirro Ligorio* 66–76.

<sup>34</sup> Foster P.E., "Raphael on the Villa Madama: The Text of a Lost Letter", *Römisches Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 11 (1967–1968) 308–312, esp. 310: 'the *diaeta* is a most delightful place to be in the winter to converse with gentlemen'. The translation is from Coffin, *The Villa* 248. Raphael had studied the Villa Adriana in Tivoli, from which he might have taken the concept; see Ranaldi, *Pirro Ligorio* 49.

<sup>35</sup> Smith G., *The Casino of Pius IV* (Princeton, NJ: 1977) and Frommel C.L., "Pirro Ligorio e l'architettura della Casina di Pio IV", in Borghese D. (ed.), *La Casina di Pio IV in Vaticano* (Turin et al.: 2010) 28–43, esp. 28–34.

<sup>36</sup> Losito M., *Pirro Ligorio e il Casino di Paolo IV in Vaticano: L'"esempio" delle "cose passate"* (Rome: 2000) 83–94. Ligorio himself did not use the term *diaeta* to describe his design

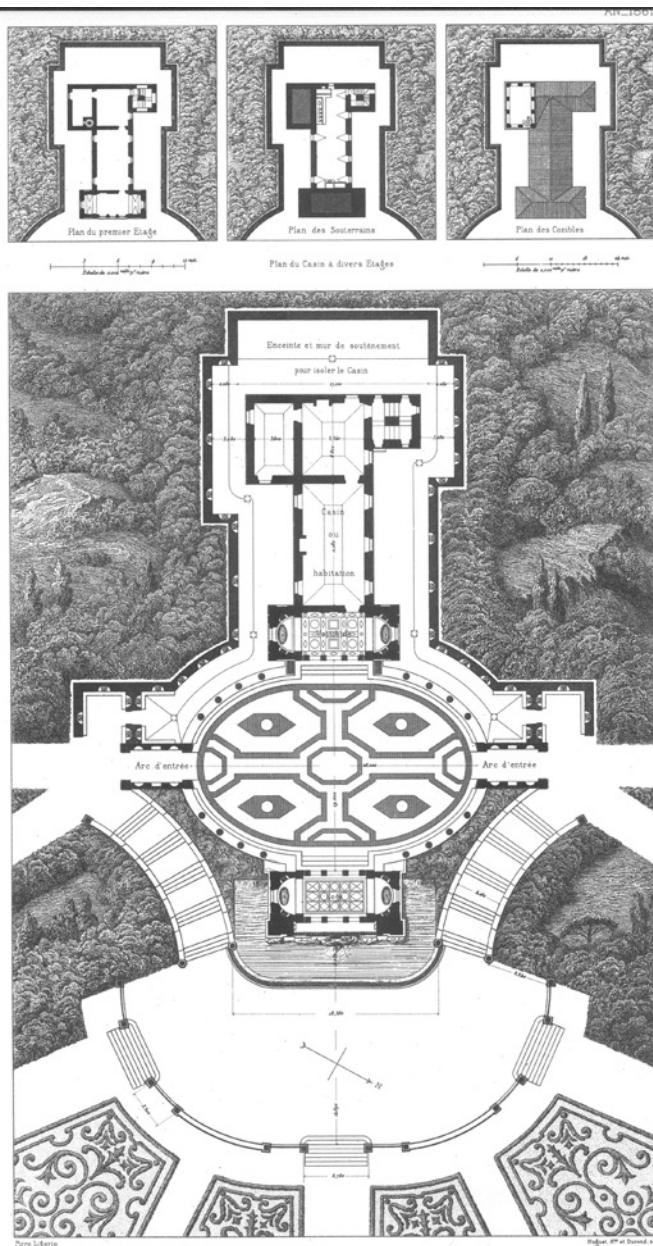


FIGURE 13.1 *Jean-Charles Hugue the Elder, Plan of the Casina Pio IV, in Paul Marie Letarouilly, Le Vatican et la basilique de Saint Pierre de Rome (Paris, Vve A. Morel et Cie, Éditeurs: 1882), vol. 2, Plate 12. Rome, Royal Dutch Institute (52.523 I36).*

IMAGE © KNIR.

the *diaeta*, which facilitated the study of the arts, conversation with friends, and the enjoyment of food in an informal atmosphere. In fact, we know that the Casino was adorned with antique sculptures and embellished with fresco and stucco decoration showing biblical scenes, and it was the place where (from 1563 onwards) the *Noctes Vaticanane*, a group of ecclesiastics involved in 'academic discussions' on the arts and religion, gathered at regular intervals.<sup>37</sup> As such, the Casino of Pius IV can be seen as a reconstruction of the Plinian architecture of solitude, a short distance from, but at the same time attached to, the Vatican palace.

### The Seventeenth Century: From Villa to Hermitage

After 1600, the idea of the villa or *diaeta* as a location for intellectual activities was maintained, while its religious function became more prominent. This idea was given real architectural form in the early seventeenth century in the Palazzetto Farnese: an addition to the palace proper, comprising a set of rooms providing seclusion for the sake of study and repose of its patron, Cardinal Odoardo Farnese (1573–1626), while the presence of a collection of works by first-rate painters pointed at the enjoyment of the arts. The decorative programme of this apartment ranged from classical themes derived from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* to allegorical and naturalistic representations of the times of the day.<sup>38</sup> A terrace on top of the building was adorned with classical statues, offering a view over water—in this case, the Tiber. A loggia on the ground floor provided access to a secluded garden with a central fountain and a collection of natural specimens, so it formed an extension of the studious activities to be developed in this *diaeta*.<sup>39</sup> It was also intended that a cryptoporticus should be built here, comparable to the one connecting the Laurentine villa to the garden *diaeta*, while at the same time creating the necessary distance—accounts show that, in 1601, workers were digging a subterranean access route

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for the Casino of Pius IV, but there are almost no references to this building in any of his writings.

<sup>37</sup> Losito M., "Villa Pia e l'Accademia delle 'Noctes Vaticanane': La cultura umanistica di san Carlo Borromeo", in Borghese, *La Casina di Pio IV in Vaticano* 96–106.

<sup>38</sup> See the description in Brooks A., "Richard Symonds and the Palazzo Farnese, 1649–50", *Journal of the History of Collections* 10, 2 (1998) 1–183, esp. 145 and 151–152, and Witte A.A., *The Artful Hermitage: The Palazzetto Farnese as a Counter-Reformation Diaeta* (Rome: 2008).

<sup>39</sup> Neal Tice L., "Collecting in the Garden: Inventories of Casini in Late Sixteenth- and Early Seventeenth-Century Rome", *Journal of the History of Collections* 23, 2 (2011) 315–331.

to the Palazzetto underneath Via Giulia. This plan had to be abandoned because of practical problems; a bridge was then constructed over the road to provide private access from the cardinal's apartment to this pavilion.<sup>40</sup>

From the later sixteenth century onwards, the ideal of the hermit became increasingly important, as a result of the growing emphasis on meditational practice for ecclesiastics; it was in this context and for this particular group that the *diaeta* became imbued with the idea of the hermitage. Cardinals such as Robert Bellarmine (1542–1621), Federico Borromeo, Paolo Emilio Sfondrato, and Odoardo Farnese, undertook frequent retreats, often in anchorite monasteries of the Camaldoleses and Cistercians. Farnese had several hermitages constructed in monastic complexes with which he was involved as cardinal protector or as commendatory abbot. In fact, the Palazzetto Farnese was not only modelled on the Plinian *diaeta*, it also copied the layout of the cells at the Camaldoleses hermitage near Arezzo, which were small, autonomous dwellings containing a number of rooms for each monk, for sleeping, eating, working, praying, and studying. The Palazzetto even contained a 'real' hermitage in the form of the Camerino degli Eremiti—with frescoed walls and a coffered ceiling with paintings by Giovanni Lanfranco, dating from around 1616, depicting saints retreating from the world for meditation [Fig. 13.2].<sup>41</sup>

This concept of retreat encompassed the entire Palazzetto. In 1615, Cardinal Robert Bellarmine, with whom Odoardo Farnese maintained close relations, as they both belonged to the reform-minded faction in papal consistory, published a small treatise entitled *Scala di salire con la mente a Dio per mezo delle cose create* (*The Soul's Ascension to God, by the Steps of Creation*). This described the secluded garden as the perfect retreat for meditational practice, and its discourse actually framed collections of *naturalia* and *artificialia* stored in the various rooms of this apartment as objects of devotion.<sup>42</sup> The second chapter, in particular, which discusses the perfection, beauty, multitude, and variety of the Creation, could be read as a devotional manual for the observer of specimens in a herbarium, a collection of fossils and minerals, a botanical garden, or even a collection of paintings depicting various subjects from nature.<sup>43</sup>

40 Uginet F.-C., *Le Palais Farnèse à travers les Documents financiers (1535–1612)*, Le Palais Farnèse, vol. 3, 1 (Rome: 1980) 92, note 6.

41 Witte A.A., "Il Camerino degli Eremiti: iconografia e funzione degli affreschi di Lanfranco", in Schleier E. (ed.), *Giovanni Lanfranco: Un pittore barocco tra Parma, Roma e Napoli* (Milan: 2001) 53–59 and Witte, *The Artful Hermitage* 9–23 and 174–180.

42 Bellarmine Robert, *Scala per salire a Dio per mezo delle cose create* (Rome, Bartolomeo Zanetti: 1615).

43 Ibidem 31.



FIGURE 13.2 *Giovanni Lanfranco, St. Mary Magdalen Rising up to Heaven (ca. 1616). Oil on canvas, 109 × 78 cm. Naples, Museo di Capodimonte (inv. no. 341).*  
IMAGE © LUCIANO PEDICINI.

This model of retreat was also followed by ecclesiastics elsewhere in Europe, fusing the act of collecting with religious considerations. There are numerous seventeenth-century examples of this phenomenon, in various countries. In Bamberg, for example, Schloss Geyerswörth was extended over the course of this century by respective archbishops of the town. One of them, presumably Philipp Valentin Voit von Rieneck, had the garden embellished with an *eremitorium* or hermitage in the 1660s. This contained in its interior a vestibule with an alabaster fountain and a 'hermit room' with three life-size figure groups representing the Virgin Mary with the Christ Child, St. Jerome with his lion, and St. Eustace and the deer with the cross in his antlers. The statues were sculpted by a Carmelite friar from the southern Netherlands, Antonius Goublé, who was employed for the project until 1668 and was then succeeded by a Capuchin artist, described in the accounts as Father Ulrich.<sup>44</sup> The walls of this space were decorated with landscape paintings and mirrors—the latter probably meant to reflect the surrounding garden, providing the visitor with the sensation of being completely surrounded by nature. Directly adjacent to the *eremitorium* was a 'Gallerey-bau', or freestanding gallery, containing paintings and two 'perspectives'—extending the study and contemplation of spiritual literature with an admiration for the aesthetics of man-made and natural things.

### Noble Hermitages and Selective Sociability in the Later Seventeenth Century

During the later seventeenth century, the vogue for hermitages extended towards the lay public, preparing the grounds for Catherine the Great's project. It started out around mid-century with patrons of the European high nobility who, for religious motives and because of the increasing attraction to meditational practices as developed and promoted by religious orders such as the Carmelites and Jesuits, desired to imitate the life of anchorites. As a result, members of the laity often sought retreat in the monastic complexes of religious orders. A French example of this phenomenon is Anne of Austria (1601–1666), queen mother of Louis XIV, who had a private apartment constructed in a tower attached to the Benedictine monastic complex of Val-de-Grâce, located near Paris. The 'grande salle de basse' of this 'pavillion du reine', located on the ground floor and giving access to a secluded garden, was decorated between

44 Mayer H., *Bamberger Residenzen, eine Kunstgeschichte der Alten Hofhaltung, des Schlosses Geyerswörth, der Neuen Hofhaltung und der Neuen Residenz zu Bamberg* (Munich: 1951) 57–58 and 164–165.



FIGURE 13.3 *Philippe de Champaigne and workshop, St. Benedict nourished by His Disciple Romain (ca. 1655–1656). Oil on canvas, 108 × 149 cm. Brussels, Musées Royaux des Beaux Arts (inv. no. 26).*

IMAGE © KONINKLIJKE MUSEA VOOR SCHONE KUNSTEN VAN BELGIË, BRUSSELS; PHOTO: J. GELEYNS—RO SCAN.

1656 and 1657 by Philippe de Champaigne with four hermit landscapes along the walls and a central panel in the ceiling presenting the 'Ravissement de sainte Madeleine'.<sup>45</sup> The walls of a room on the first floor of this tower were decorated with a cycle of paintings depicting scenes from the solitary life of St. Benedict, also painted by De Champaigne and his assistants. As contemporary sources attest, this apartment was not only a spiritual retreat, but was also created for her to escape from the court and its restricting etiquette.<sup>46</sup>

45 Pericolo L., *Philippe de Champaigne: "Philippe, homme sage et vertueux". Essai sur l'art et l'oeuvre de Philippe de Champaigne (1602–1674)* (Tournai – Brussels: 2002) 214–221 and Brême D., "Un cas d'école: le cycle de la Vie de saint Benoît pour l'appartement d'Anne d'Autriche au Val-de-Grâce", in *À l'école de Philippe de Champaigne* (Paris: 2007) 175–201, esp. 179–180.

46 Motteville F. de, *Mémoires de Mme de Motteville pour servir à l'histoire d'Anne d'Autriche* (Paris: 1823), vol. 11, 89: 'Elle le témoigna au roi par son silence et par une résolution qu'elle fit intérieurement de quitter la cour et de se retirer au Val-de-Grâce'.—She attested

The fact that the cycle with scenes from the life of St. Benedict depicts the saint retreating from society, in nature, but always in the company of his disciples, might be an allusion to this sociable solitude sought by the former queen [Fig. 13.3].

In Italy, the hermitage became a feature of city palaces as well. Both female and male members of noble families such as the Mancini, Altieri, and Colonna had separate suites of rooms constructed directly adjacent to their formal apartments in their Roman palaces, for which artists like Johann Paul Schor, a collaborator in the workshop of Bernini, designed hermitages [Fig. 13.4] that looked simple but were in fact very luxurious.<sup>47</sup> The primary purpose of these *romitorii*—as they were called in Italian sources around 1700—was not religious devotion, however, but predominantly escape with friends from courtly ceremony. This is expressed in the lack of paintings displaying hermit saints; furthermore, the presence of a limited number of seats [Fig. 13.5] points to the fact that these nobles invited selected company into these spaces. These *romitorii* were also locations created for the reading of novels: at that time a new literary genre.<sup>48</sup> The Mancini hermitage actually contained bookcases, pointing to the fact that reading, and thus literary activities in private, was one of the functions of these apartments.<sup>49</sup> During the later seventeenth century, the adaptation of the hermitage by a secular public thus deprived the concept of its exclusively religious function, re-introducing elements from the original concept of the *diaeta*—especially as a place for literary and other sociable activities for limited groups of invitees. As such, the hermitage provided informal conversation for a more select public akin to what the upcoming phenomenon academy was offering on a more public scale, and so was part of a more general trend toward the relaxation of social etiquette.<sup>50</sup>

The combination of secular and spiritual elements in the seventeenth-century hermitage could also offer an ideal location for the contemplation of art—from both a religious point of view and an aesthetic one—thus constituting a preferred location for collecting. A German example of this might be discerned

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against the king by means of her silence, by the decision she took internally to leave the court and retreat at Val-de-Grâce'.

47 Witte A.A., "Hermits in High Society: Private Retreats in Late Seicento Rome", in *Art, Site and Spectacle*, Melbourne Art Journal 9/10 (Melbourne: 2007) 104–119, esp. 111–112.

48 Fumaroli M., "Jacques Amyot and the Clerical Polemic Against the Chivalric Novel", *Renaissance Quarterly* 38 (1985) 22–40; Martin P., *Une religion des livres (1640–1850)* (Paris: 2003); Witte, "Hermits in High Society" 116.

49 Witte, "Hermits in High Society" 111.

50 Donato M.P., *Accademie romane: Una storia sociale, 1671–1824* (Naples: 2000) 27–28, 77–84 and 106–108.



FIGURE 13.4 *Anon. artist, Coupe de l'Hermitage du Palais Colonna (ca. 1687). Pen and wash on paper, 41 x 27 cm. Stockholm, Nationalmuseum (inv. no. THC 371).*  
IMAGE © NATIONALMUSEUM, STOCKHOLM.

in a pavilion erected by Duke Anton Ulrich of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel in the garden of his residence at Salzdahlum between 1688 and 1694 [Fig. 13.6].<sup>51</sup> This was designated in contemporary sources as a hermitage, and, as was almost obligatory, contained landscapes frescoes. These were painted in 1697 by

51 Blankenstein D., "Die Gemäldegalerie in Salzdahlum und Braunschweig", in Savoy B. (ed.), *Tempel der Kunst: Die Entstehung des öffentlichen Museums in Deutschland 1701–1815* (Mainz: 2006) 67–86.

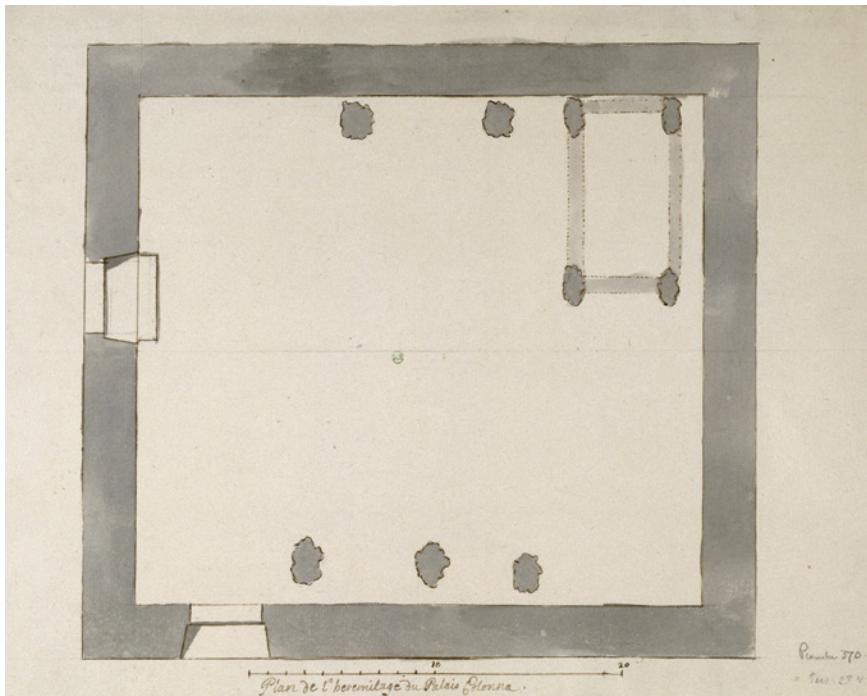


FIGURE 13.5 Anon. artist, *Plan de l'Hermitage de Palais Colonna (ca. 1687)*. Pen and wash on paper, 28 × 40 cm. Stockholm, Nationalmuseum (inv. no. THC 370).  
IMAGE © NATIONALMUSEUM, STOCKHOLM.

Johann Oswald Harms, who had been inspired by Roman Baroque examples and Salvator Rosa in particular.<sup>52</sup> As descriptions make clear, the hermitage comprised—apart from the mandatory chapel with, in this case, the figure of St. Jerome—‘verschiedenen traulichen Studierzimmern und Kabinetten mit Einsiedler-Geräthschaften’.<sup>53</sup> These *Geräthschaften* were most probably writing utensils, as that would fit best the function of the hermitage as study.<sup>54</sup> The

52 Quaeitzsch C., ‘Garms, Johann Oswald’, in Meißner G. – Beyer A (eds.), *Allgemeines Künstlerlexikon*, vol. 69 (Berlin: 2011) 366–367, esp. 367.

53 ‘several cosy rooms for study and cabinets with utensils for hermits’; see Brandes K., *Das ehemalige fürstliche Lustschloß Salzdahlum und seine Ueberreste* (Wolfenbüttel: 1880) 13; see also the description given in 1796 by Carl Philipp von Ribbentrop cited in Savoy, *Tempel der Kunst* 369.

54 See Steingrüber Johann Christian August, *Der englische Einsiedler* (Leipzig, Kleyb: 1792) 270: ‘Unter in der Kiste lag ein Fäßchen Branntwein, ein Kas von Chester, eine lederne

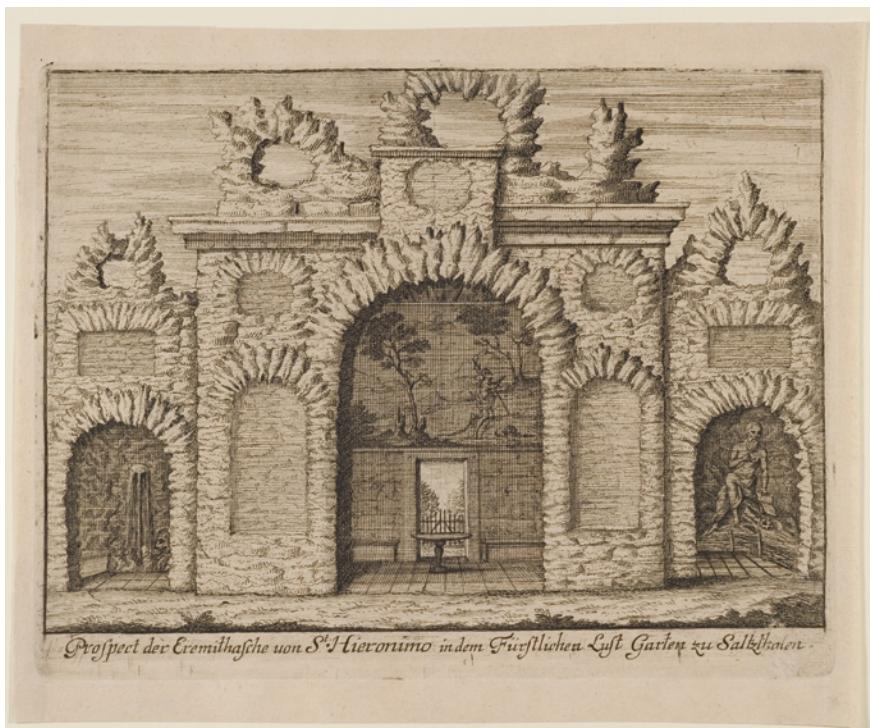


FIGURE 13.6 Jacob Wilhelm Heckenauer, Hermitage in the Gardens of Schloss Salzdahlum (1706). Etching, 17 x 22 cm. Braunschweig, Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum (inv. no. 6700).

IMAGE © HERZOG ANTON ULRICH MUSEUM, BRAUNSCHWEIG.

entire complex of Salzdahlum was, from the start, thought of as a *musaeum*, in the sense that it housed the enormous ducal collection of paintings and rich holdings of books and natural objects. Indeed, a visitor to the garden next to the hermitage would encounter the Fountain of Parnassus, which functioned as the focus of the entire layout.<sup>55</sup> The hermitage might, therefore, have provided a place where the Duke could retreat from the more formal part of the

Flasche voll Tinte, ein Bund Federn, und ein Federmesser. Diese letztern Geräthschaften machten ihm Vergnügen [...].—‘At the bottom of the chest lay a bottle with spirits, a Chester cheese, a leather flask with ink, a bundle of pens, and a penknife. These latter utensils pleased him [...].

55 Querfurt Tobias, *Kurtze Beschreibung des Fürstl: Lust-Schlosses Saltzdahlum* (Brunswick, Johann Georg Zilligen: ca. 1710) s.p.: ‘Ich wende mich von hier wieder zu dem Brunnen

palace, and informally discuss the arts and sciences, probably in the company of courtiers.

### The Eighteenth Century: From Hermitage to *Villa-musaeum*

The inclusion of collections in a hermitage and the opening up of these spaces to a select audience became ever more common after 1700. In the Italian context this is apparent in two examples created by Cardinal Domenico Silvio Passionei (1682–1761), vice-cardinal protector of the Vatican Library from 1741 onwards. He was a man of learning and one of the ardent book collectors of his age.<sup>56</sup> He was also cardinal protector of the Cistercians and he had an apartment constructed for himself on the second floor of the monastery of this order in Rome at San Bernardo alle Terme.<sup>57</sup> As his early biographer, Galletti, recounted, he used this apartment for *esercizi spirituali*, yearly devotional retreats, so it was in the first place intended for prayer and devotion, just as the apartments of Cardinal Odoardo Farnese had been. However, it seems that he also entertained friends here and kept a large personal collection of books. This retreat was, moreover, adorned with portrait prints of illustrious men (not only ecclesiastics, but also philosophers and writers)—which reflected Passionei's interest in learning in the broadest sense.<sup>58</sup> These books and prints were actually of such excellent quality that—according to the biography—in 1740, the monks of San Bernardo had a marble tablet mounted on the stairs providing entrance to this apartment, on which the excellence of the contents of this 'bibliotheca' was recorded.<sup>59</sup>

Passionei also created a more extensive retreat in the form of a real hermitage at Frascati, close to Rome, in the local monastery of the Camaldolesian order, of which he had become cardinal protector in 1738. In that same year, Passionei

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und von da vollends zum Parnasso'.—'From here I return again to the fountain and from there toward the Parnassus'.

56 Serrai A., *Domenico Passionei e la sua biblioteca* (Milan: 2004).

57 Ortolani S., *S. Bernardo alle Terme e le distrutte chiese di S. Ciriaco e S. Caterina in Thermis* (Rome: 1924) 28.

58 Devoti L., *L'eremo tuscolano e la villa detta dei Furi* (Frascati: 1981) 58.

59 Galletti Pier Luigi, *Memorie per servire alla storia della vita del cardinale Domenico Passionei segretario de' brevi e bibliotecario della S. Sede apostolica* (Rome, Generoso Salomoni: 1762) 172. Passionei was also buried in this church, see Antinori A., "Domenico Passionei tra giansenismo e culto dell'antico: Il romitorio presso Frascati e la tomba in San Bernardo alle Terme", in A. Gambardella (ed.), *Ferdinando Sanfelice: Napoli e l'Europa* (Naples: 2004) 55–65, esp. 62.

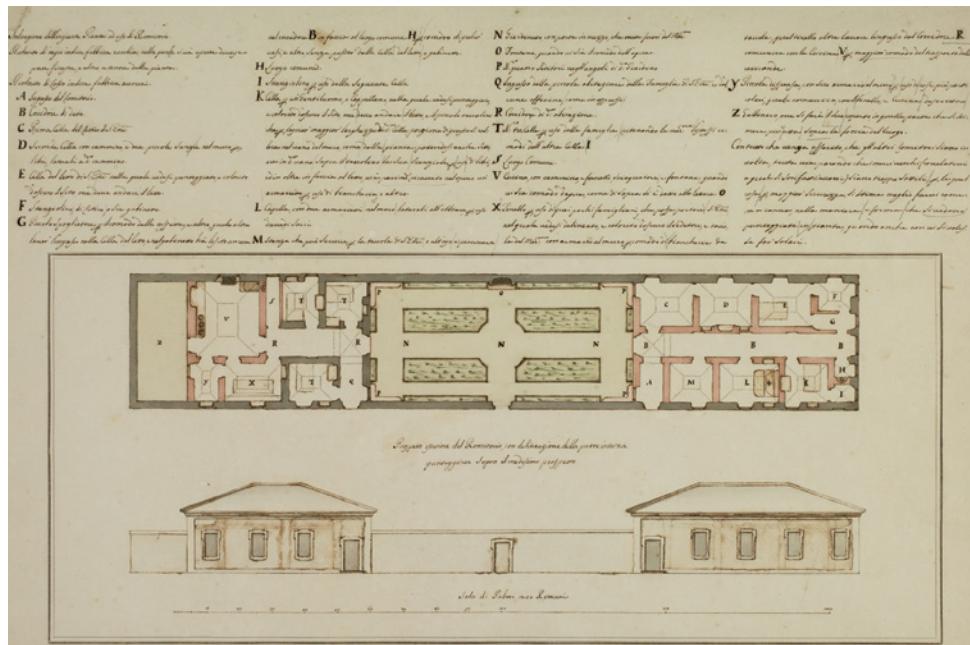


FIGURE 13.7 *Ferdinando Fuga, Project for the Passionei Hermitage at Frascati (1739). Pen, brown ink, and wash on paper, 36 × 52 cm. Rome, Istituto Centrale per la Grafica (inv. no. FN 13901).*

IMAGE © ISTITUTO CENTRALE PER LA GRAFICA, ROME.

obtained papal permission to restructure two adjacent cells so that he could retreat there on a regular basis.<sup>60</sup> These two separate cells and their adjoining gardens were turned into one coherent complex, also containing a gallery on the basis of plans by Ferdinand Fuga [Fig. 13.7].<sup>61</sup> The retreat was, moreover, adorned with fresco decoration, many sculptures, paintings and prints, and

60 Passionei was not alone in obtaining such a privilege; in 1738, Bishop José Maria Fonseca, legate of the Portuguese King, was given the right to use the Franciscan monastery of Santa Maria della Neve in Palazzola, close to Castel Gandolfo, as a summer retreat. See Roccasecca P., "Il giardino del convento di Santa Maria della Neve a Palazzola e i lavori di Padre De Fonseca ed Evora", in S. Vasco Rocca – G. Borghini (eds.), *Giovanni Vdi Portogallo (1707–1750) e la cultura romana del suo tempo* (Rome: 1995) 185–196, esp. 187. For the breve see Pasqueira J. De, *Palazzola. Um convento português na Itália* (Oporto: 1904), document vi.

61 Kieven E., *Ferdinando Fuga e l'architettura romana del Settecento: I disegni di architettura dalle collezioni del Gabinetto Nazionale delle Stampe* (Rome: 1988) 55–56 and 147. Negro A. "Eremo di Camaldoli", in *Villa e Paese: Dimore nobili del Tuscolo e di Marino* (Rome: 1980) 234–236 negates the attribution to Fuga.

another large collection of books.<sup>62</sup> Some of these volumes were extremely important, such as a prized codex with drawings after the antique by Raphael's workshop.<sup>63</sup> Over the subsequent years, Passionei acquired an ever-larger portion of the anchorite complex and turned the northern half of it into a garden, in which he had antique urns, busts, and classical statues installed. Roman funerary monuments and reliefs were also inserted into the perimeter walls of the garden. As a result, this villa-cum-hermitage functioned as a retreat for spiritual activities and as a place where Passionei could write poems. At the same time, it was home to a collection of diverse objects reflecting his broad learning.<sup>64</sup>

In addition, he also received guests in his hermitage, amongst whom were James III, Catholic pretender to the English and Scottish thrones, Cardinal Carlo Rezzonico (later Pope Clement XIII), and Pope Benedict XIV (1740–1758), the librarian and academic Giovanni Gaetano Bottari, and Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–1768). The latter is known to have frequented the hermitage especially often: for example, reading Plato to the company gathered there—in fact, in 1753 Passionei had asked Winckelmann to become his librarian, encouraging him to move to Rome (where he instead came to work for Cardinal Alessandro Albani (1692–1779)), and they remained in close contact until the cardinal's death.<sup>65</sup> Artists also came to the hermitage, one of whom was Pier Leone Ghezzi, who recorded in his sketchbook caricatures of Passionei himself [Fig. 13.8] and many of his visitors, often noting in his comments that he had drawn them while in Camaldoli.<sup>66</sup> A letter by the French Oratorian Joseph-Adrien Lelarge de Lignac, who during his sojourn in Rome was received a number of times in Frascati, mentioned that 'Ce cardinal m'a souvent fait l'honneur de m'y admettre, parmi un petit nombre d'amis choisis. Tout y respire la piété, la liberté, et la gaité. L'abondance y regne sans luxe, et sans profusion'.<sup>67</sup>

62 Devoti, *L'eremo tuscolano* 62.

63 Nesselrath A., *Das Fossombroner Skizzenbuch* (London: 1993) 7.

64 One particularly interesting poem is the *Meditazione del Card. Passionei nel suo ritiro di Camaldoli nel mese di Maggio 1758 nel tempo che i Cardinali erano nel Conclave*, in MS in Biblioteca Civica, Fossombrone, published in Serrai, *Domenico Passionei* 643–652. The poem itself, in four *Canti*, likened his own retreat to Camaldoli to the retreat of the Cardinals during the Conclave.

65 Winckelmann J.J., *Briefe* (Berlin: 1952), vol. 1, 122.

66 Dorati da Empoli M.C., *Pier Leone Ghezzi: Un protagonista del Settecento Romano* (Rome: 2008) 278–283 describing the caricatures made by Ghezzi at Frascati in 1748, in Codice Ottoboniano Lat. 318 in the Vatican Library. See also Diana L. (ed.), *Pier Leone Ghezzi e le caricature dell'Album Passionei nella Biblioteca Civica di Fossombrone* (Fermo: 2015).

67 Galletti, *Memorie* 176: 'This cardinal has often shown me the honour of admitting me amidst a small group of select friends. Everything here breathes piety, freedom and



FIGURE 13.8 *Pier Leone Ghezzi, Caricature of Cardinal Passionei (1740) fol. 1. Pen and ink on paper. Vatican City, Vatican Library (inv. no. BAV Ottoboni Lat. 3118).*

IMAGE © 2016 BIBLIOTECA APOSTOLICA VATICANA.

One of the rooms of the cardinal's apartment in this complex was furnished as a private library and functioned in the afternoon as a place where his guests—drawn from all ranks of society (albeit mainly the higher ones)—would gather and discuss various themes they derived from the books they had taken from the shelves:

Ne si dee credere, che fossero que' libri qui situati solamente a pompa, poichè oltre al continuo uso, che se ne faceva la mattina, la quale il cardinale in specie spendea tutta intera nel leggere, era poi costume qui introdotto, che la sera ciascuno della compagnia tornando dal passeggio andasse a prendere que' libri, che più gli piacevano, e ragunandosi tutti nella stanza dello stesso cardinale fino all'ora della cena, vi si trattenevano leggendo, e discorrendo di quelle materie stesse, ch'essi libri somministravano.<sup>68</sup>

In other words, it was a space exempt from formal etiquette, dedicated to the arts and sciences. And, as the complaints of the Camaldolesi monks still living in the monastic complex made clear, these guests usually arrived in chattering parties.<sup>69</sup> In Passionei's Camaldoli, we see the original concept of the hermitage—silence and solitude—turned into attentiveness and sociability. All this was summarised succinctly by Galletti: 'questo nuovo genere di villa quanto ispirava ritiratezza, e devozione, altrettanto somministrava pascolo di erudizione agli scelti uomini, ch'ei seco vi conduceva'.<sup>70</sup>

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happiness. Abundance reigns here without luxury, and without profusion'. See also Perru O., 'Father Joseph Lelarge de Lignac, a French Oratorian and a Friend of Reaumur against Buffon', *Philosophy Study* 7, 5 (2005) 356–360, esp. 356.

68 Galletti, *Memorie* 173: 'One should not think that these books were only placed here for showing off, because apart from the frequent use during the mornings which the cardinal normally entirely dedicated to reading, it was a habit introduced here that every evening each of the guests returning from his walk would take those books that pleased him most, and gathering in the room of the cardinal himself until dinner time, they would stay there reading and discussing those subjects that were furnished by these books'. Antinori, "Domenico Passionei tra giansenismo" 60–62 ascribes Passionei's preference for this location with reference to his presumed French and Jansenist affinities.

69 Mittarelli Giovanni Benedetto – Costadoni Anselmo, *Annales Camaldulenses ordinis Sancti Benedicti* (Venice, Gio. Battista Pasquali: 1764), vol. 8, 214.

70 Galletti, *Memorie* 173: 'this new type of villa incited so much retreat and devotion, and just as much it furnished a meadow of erudition for selected men, whom he brought there with him'.

A more explicit shift towards the secular and the public can be observed in other European countries—in the German city of Bayreuth, for example, where from 1725 onwards Wilhelmine of Prussia (1709–1758), Margrave of Brandenburg-Culmbach had her hermitage constructed just outside the town as a space for social events. It was decorated with a mirror gallery, as discussed in this volume by Marie Theres Stauffer, and also portraits of famous philosophers, such as Bayle, Locke, and Newton, reflecting the element of learning during these gatherings.<sup>71</sup> In England, Queen Caroline's hermitage in Richmond, built in 1730, also contained four busts of philosophers—in this case of Newton, Locke, Clarke, and Woolaston.<sup>72</sup> A print by John Vardy shows the striking classical appearance of this hermitage's interior. Apart from the central space with the busts, it also contained two alcoves, one on either side [Fig. 13.9]; one of these contained a library and the other a bed—thus reminding one immediately of the architecture and function of the Plinian *diaeta*. Although Pope and Swift mocked this edifice in their writings, the Cave (as it was known) proved to be a great success with the general public, who were admitted to the gardens on certain days. The *Gentleman's Magazine* of 1735 described the exterior of the hermitage, which presented itself as a fake ruin, in the following words:

as a heap of stones, thrown into a very artful disorder, and curiously embellished with moss and shrubs, to represent rude nature. But I was strangely surpris'd to find the entrance of it barr'd with a range of costly gilt rails, which not only seemed to show an absurdity of taste, but created in me a melancholy reflection that luxury had found its way even into the Hermit's Cell.<sup>73</sup>

As such, the presence of books and portraits of famous authors and philosophers became the typical interior adornment for the hermitage in the European context, inciting a 'conversation' between the real visitors and those present in

<sup>71</sup> See Habermann S., *Bayreuther Gartenkunst: Die Gärten des Markgrafen von Brandenburg-Culmbach im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert* (Worms: 1982) 141–142.

<sup>72</sup> Coffin D., *The English Garden: Meditation and Memorial* (Princeton, NJ: 1994) 91–92 and Balderston G.D., "Giovanni Battista Guelfi: Five Busts for Queen Caroline's Hermitage in Richmond", *The Sculpture Journal* 17, 1 (2008) 83–88.

<sup>73</sup> Craftsman, "Merlin's Prophecy, with an Interpretation", *The Gentleman's Magazine* 5 (September 1735) 533.

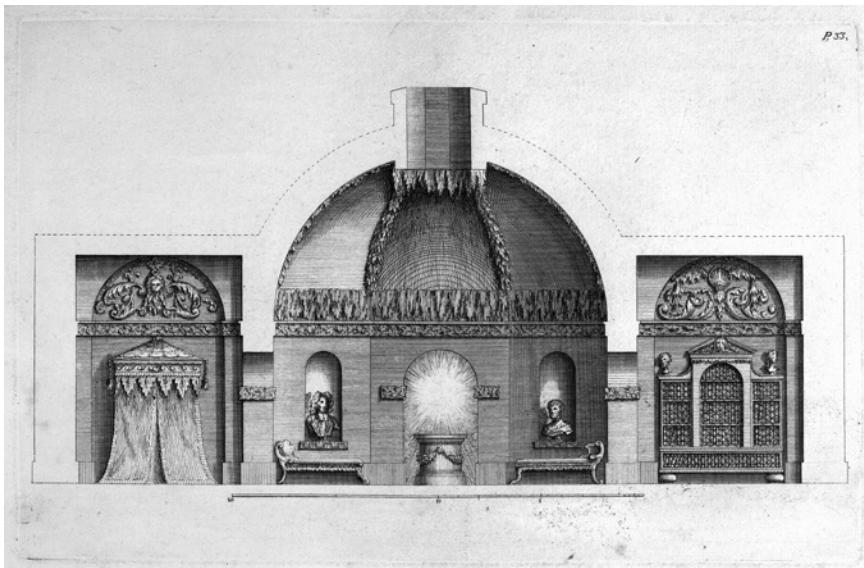


FIGURE 13.9 John Vardy, *Section of the hermitage at Richmond*, in John Vardy, *Some Designs of M. Inigo Jones and Mr. Wm. Kent* (London, John Vardy: 1744) plate 33. Etching, 43.4 x 28.4 cm (paper size). London, Royal Institute of British Architects (EW 1629).

IMAGE © RIBA, LONDON.

the form of sculptures and or books.<sup>74</sup> It also marked the substitution of theology for philosophy, and thus secularisation.

The Passionei, Bayreuth, and the Richmond examples also show that the conceptual and architectural distinctions between the hermitage, the villa, and the *diaeta* had become fluid—indeed, they served very similar purposes. The secular adoption of the hermitage, meanwhile, meant a return to the original concept of the *diaeta-villa-cum-museum*, which can be traced in reconstructions of the Plinian villa undertaken by architects and antiquarians in the later eighteenth century. One interesting reconstruction was made, again on the basis of Pliny's letter, by the German architect Friedrich August Krubsacius. In 1760, he published his *Wahrscheinlicher Entwurf, von des jüngern Plinius Landhause und Garten, Laurens genannt* (*Possible Design of the Villa and Garden of Pliny the Younger, called Laurentina*), in which each of the spaces described by the Latin author was identified in his reconstruction [Fig. 13.10].

74 Baker M., *The Marble Index: Roubiliac and Sculptural Portraiture in Eighteenth-century Britain* (New Haven, CT – London: 2014) 120–122.

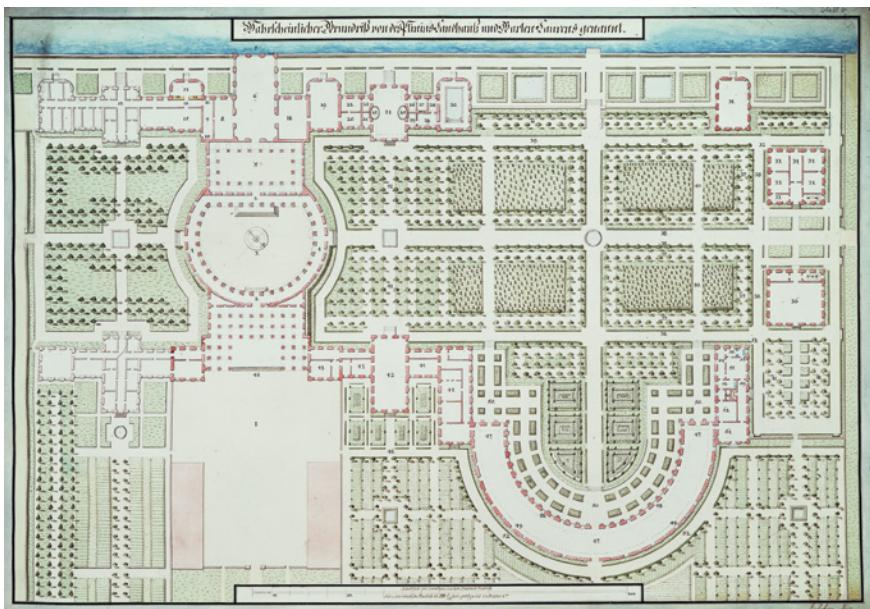


FIGURE 13.10 *Friedrich August Krubsacius, Wahrscheinlicher Grundriß von des Plinius Landhauß und Garten Laurens genannt (ca. 1760). Pen, ink, and wash on paper, 48 × 68 cm. Dresden, Sächsische Landesbibliothek (inv. no. Archaeol.177,6).*  
IMAGE © SLUB DRESDEN/DEUTSCHE FOTOTHEK/ANDRÉ ROUS.

The garden *diaeta*, which was translated by Krubsacius as 'garden pavilion', was located at the end of a semi-circular portico, at the far end of the premises (at the lower left hand side of the plan, Nos. 54–61).<sup>75</sup> One of the most elaborate discussions of the concept can be found in the 1796 *Delle ville di Plinio il Giovane (Of Pliny the Younger's Villas)* by the Mexican Jesuit Pedro Márquez.<sup>76</sup> He surveyed the ruins identified as the Laurentine villa located along the coast near Castel Fusano, on the property of the Villa Sacchetti, and he published a

75 Krubsacius Friedrich August, *Wahrscheinlicher Entwurf von des jüngern Plinius Landhause und Garten, Laurens genannt, nach Anzeige seines 17. Briefes des II. Buchs, an den Gallus* (Leipzig, Joh. Gottlob Immanuel Breitkopf: 1760) 28 and 55–56, where he equated the word 'diaeta' with the German 'Wohnung' and the French 'apartement'. See Zobel-Klein D., "Die Villen des jüngeren Plinius in der Imagination der frühen Neuzeit: Die Rekonstruktion der Gärten des toscanischen und des laurentinischen Landhauses durch Friedrich August Krubsacius", in Wenzel M. (ed.), *Römische Gärten der Winckelmann-Zeit* (Ruhpolding: 2006) 37–58.

76 Ruffinière du Prey, *Villas of Pliny* 87–89.

reconstructive drawing of it. He identified the Laurentine ground floor *diaeta* with a number of spaces, in this case not accessible through, but surrounded by, the cryptoporticus.<sup>77</sup> Also, other eighteenth-century reconstructions describe the Laurentine villa as containing a pavilion that is close to, but also separate from, the main building, thereby offering perfect solitude within walking distance.<sup>78</sup>

The impact of these new reconstructions of Pliny's villa on real architecture is most clearly illustrated in the Villa Albani, built between 1747 and 1767 for Cardinal Alessandro Albani in Rome. This complex comprised a separate, semi-circular pavilion constructed at the end of the formal garden opposite the main Casino, which is often indicated in contemporary sources as *Caffeaus*, the Italianised version of the 'coffee house', in which the new social ritual of drinking coffee was localised.<sup>79</sup> It consisted of a semi-circular portico with an open pavilion at each end, embracing a terrace, in the midst of which stood a fountain carried by statues of satyrs. The central part of the portico provided access to a number of spaces, including an *anticamera* ("Canopeum") leading to a galleria, called "Del Canopo" (as it contained four Egyptian statues), and a portico on the lower floor, opening up towards the landscape beyond the formal garden.<sup>80</sup> It was in this portico that Cardinal Albani had most of his Greek sculptures installed.<sup>81</sup>

The complex strongly reminded eighteenth-century visitors of Plinian villas; the similarity of its layout to Krubsacius's reconstruction of the Laurentine villa is indicative. Indeed, in 1770, the German erudite traveller Johann Jacob Volkmann described the complex as 'a villa of an ancient Roman, or Pliny's Laurentina [...]'<sup>82</sup> Therefore it does not surprise that in the 1779 illustrated

77 Márquez Pedro, *Delle ville di Plinio il giovane* (Rome, Salomoni: 1796) 23–25.

78 See for example Stanislaus Potocki's reconstruction of 1777–1778 discussed in Miziolek J., "Reconstructing Antiquity in the 1770s: The Decoration of Pliny the Younger's Villa Maritima in Count Stanislaus K. Potocki's Vision", in Bartsch T. – Becker M. – Bredekamp H. – Schreiter C. (eds.), *Das Originale der Kopie. Kopien als Produkte und Medien der Transformation von Antike* (Berlin – New York, NY: 2010) 223–245, esp. 227–230.

79 Heise U., *Kaffee und Kaffeehaus: Eine Kulturgeschichte* (Hildesheim: 1987) and Cowan B.W., *The Social Life of Coffee: The Emergence of the British Coffeehouse* (New Haven, CT: 2005).

80 Allroggen-Bedel A., "Einleitung", in Bol P.C. (ed.), *Bildwerke im Kaffeehaus*, Forschungen zur Villa Albani: Katalog der antiken Bildwerke vol. 4 (Berlin: 1994) 13–33.

81 Allroggen-Bedel A., "La villa Albani: criteri di scelta e disposizione delle antichità", in Debenedetti E. (ed.), *Collezionismo e ideologia: Mecenati, artisti e teorici dal classico al neoclassico* (Rome: 1991) 205–221, esp. 207.

82 Volkmann Johann Jacob, *Historisch-kritische Nachrichten von Italien* (Leipzig, Fritsch: 1770), vol. 2, 824: 'Die Kolonnade am Hauptgebäude, die runde Gallerie in der Form eines

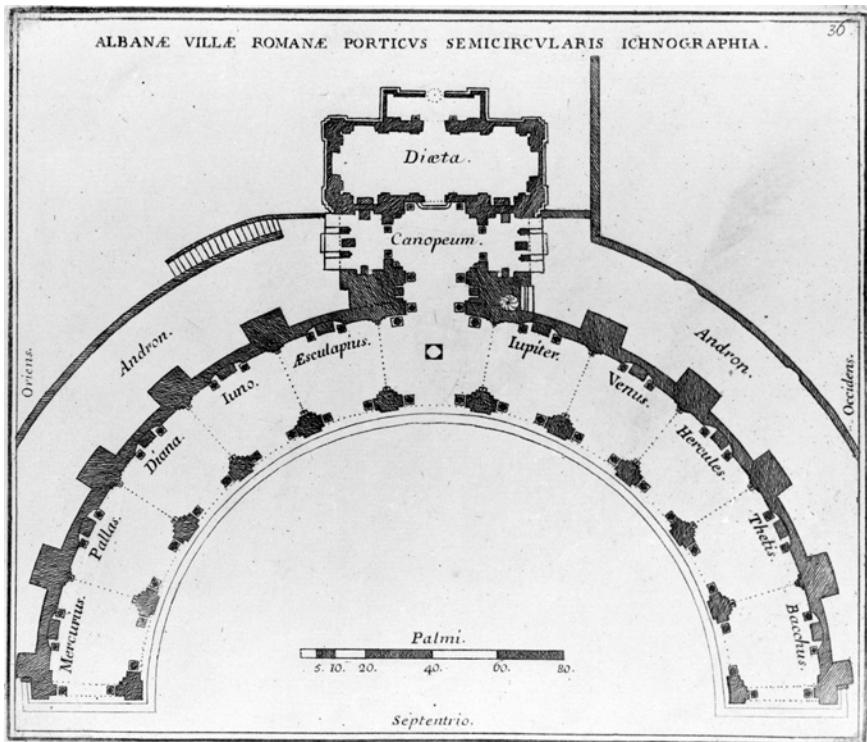


FIGURE 13.11 Anon. artist, "Plan of the semicircular portico of the Villa Albani", in Gaetano Quojani, *Calcografia degli Edifizi di Roma* (Rome, Gaetano Quojani: 1779), vol. 1, plate 36. Etching, 21 x 28 cm. Rome, Bibliotheca Hertziana (Dg 536-3791/1 raro).  
IMAGE © BIBLIOTHECA HERTZIANA, ROME.

guidebook *La città di Roma ovvero descrizione di questa superba città* (*The City of Rome, or rather a Description of this Superb Town*), the Galleria del Canopo was given a caption reading *diaeta* [Fig. 13.11].<sup>83</sup> The function of the *Caffeaus* was

Xystus der Alten, die Tempel, die Menge der Statuen, alles dieses zusammen, führt den Liebhaber der Alterthümer gleichsam in ein prächtiges Landhaus eines alten Römers, oder in das Laurentinum des Plinius [...].—The columns of the main building, the round gallery in the form of a Xystus of the ancients, the temple, the many statues, all this taken together draws the enthusiast of antiquity as it were into a wonderful villa of an ancient Roman, or Pliny's Laurentine Villa [...].

<sup>83</sup> See Coffin, *Gardens and Gardening* 168–196 and Roettgen S., "Die Villa Albani und ihre Bauten", in Beck H. – Bol P.C. (eds.), *Forschungen zur Villa Albani: Antike Kunst und die Epoche der Aufklärung* (Berlin: 1982) 59–122, esp. 175.

thus considered comparable to that of the *diaeta*—both spaces were places where the normal rules of etiquette did not apply and offered a place for informal discussion and dining.<sup>84</sup> In the case of the Albani villa, the entire complex was dedicated to the arts, functioning as a private ‘proto-museum’, where select visitors would be invited to discuss the aesthetic qualities of the statues, and the *Caffeaus* was the focal point of the whole complex.<sup>85</sup> It is certainly no coincidence that Winckelmann, who had previously frequented the gatherings in the Passionei hermitage-villa, developed his revolutionary ideas about classical sculpture in this particular context.

### Catherine the Great and Her Hermitage

The Hermitage in St. Petersburg can be interpreted against the backdrop of this pan-European development from hermitage to *diaeta* to proto-museum. Before the buildings of the Great and the New Hermitage were designed as modern museum complexes in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Small Hermitage started out in the 1760s as a place to escape from court protocol. Very soon it developed into an accumulation of diverse collections, and became the preferred location for court gatherings not governed by restrictive protocol.

The origins of Catherine the Great’s Hermitage can be traced to earlier Russian examples that are, in turn, the result of European influences on the Tsar’s court. Peter the Great was the first to introduce the architectural type of the hermitage and its particular function in Russia, when from 1705 onwards he had Peterhof built, modelled on examples he had seen in Versailles and Marly le Roy.<sup>86</sup> Flouting the old rules of courtly society was also an important aspect of Catherine’s initial project—which led to the extension of the Winter Palace with the Small Hermitage, designed between 1763 and 1767 by Jean-Baptiste Vallin de la Mothe and then enlarged, or finished, on the basis

84 See recently also Johns C.M.S., “Papal Diplomacy and the Catholic Enlightenment: Benedict XIV’s ‘Caffeaus’ in the Quirinal Gardens”, in Messbarger R. – Johns C.M.S. – Gavitt P., *Benedict XIV and the Enlightenment* (Toronto – Buffalo, NY – London: 2016) 367–387.

85 For the informal function of the *Caffeaus*, see Roettgen, “Die Villa Albani” 103–104; for the interpretation of the Villa Albani as proto-museum, see Heskia T., “Die Villa Albani: Ein Prototyp des privaten Sammlermuseums”, in *Museen und Fürstliche Sammlungen im 18. Jahrhundert* (Brunswick: 2007) 73–79.

86 Artemieva I., “L’Ermitage di Caterina II”, in Cappelletti F. (ed.), *Le tentazioni dell’ermitage* (Milan: 2011) 147–152.

of Vallin's designs, by Georg Friedrich Velten.<sup>87</sup> It is possible that the French painter Charles-Louis Clerisseau (1721–1820) provided additional inspiration: the department of prints and drawings of the Petersburg Hermitage actually contains a large number of drawings and designs by Clerisseau, amongst which is a folder with drawings and a descriptive text, entitled *Observations sur le projet du Museum qui est aussi contenu dans le portefeuille* (*Observations on the Project of the Museum also contained in this Folder*), and another one with *Observations sur le Palais projeté pour Sa Majesté Imperiale* (*Observations on the Palace planned for Her Imperial Majesty*).<sup>88</sup> Clerisseau had already been involved in similar projects: he executed parts of the decoration of the Villa Albani, painted a 'Hermitage' in fresco for Thomas le Sueur in the convent of Trinità dei Monti, and he also designed a folly for the garden of Passionei's hermitage at Frascati.<sup>89</sup> It is therefore logical to assume that the Italian developments (mixed with French and German influences, given Catherine the Great's Prussian background) leading to the conflation of hermitage and *diaeta* into a location where the arts and letters could be discussed, provided inspiration for Catherine the Great, through the foreign artists she attracted to her court.

Also the architecture of the Small Hermitage provides indications about relations with international late eighteenth-century classicising examples such as the Villa Albani but it is especially similar to the plan of the Passionei Hermitage. Access to the imperial Hermitage from the Winter Palace was by means of a bridge; its layout consisted of three galleries around an enclosed garden with classical sculptures, and its fourth side (the south pavilion, at the bottom of the plan) comprised a series of smaller rooms functioning as a private apartment [Fig. 13.12]. In all respects, this hermitage was consistent with the concept of the *diaeta*; at the same time, the apartment also contained rooms such as the "Confidenzzimmer", decorated as a real hermitage, where the empress dined with a small number of friends without being forced into formalities by the presence of servants.<sup>90</sup> The presence

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87 Lossky B., "En attendant la première monographie de Jean-Baptiste-Michel Vallin de La Mothe (1729–1800)", *Gazette des Beaux Arts* 111 (1988) 302. See also Denisov J.M. – Piotrovskij B.B., *Ermitaz istorija stroitel'stva i architektura zdanij—Hermitage: History of Buildings, Erection and Architecture* (Leningrad: 1989) 316–348 and Guseva N., "Catherine's Apartments in Her Imperial Palaces", *British Art Journal* 2, 2 (2000/2001) 100–109, esp. 106.

88 Chevtchenko V., "Les desseins de Clerisseau", in *Charles-Louis Clerisseau (1721–1820): Dessins du Musée de l'Ermitage, Saint Pétersbourg* (Paris: 1995) 75–84.

89 McCormick T.J., *Charles-Louis Clerisseau and the Genesis of Neo-Classicism* (Cambridge, MA: 1990) 99.

90 Krašeninnikov, A.F. – Ljudina, R. "Istorija stroitel'stva Malogo Ermitaža", *Soobščenija Gosudarstvennogo Ermitaža* 25 (1964) 8–11. See also the description in Georgi Johann

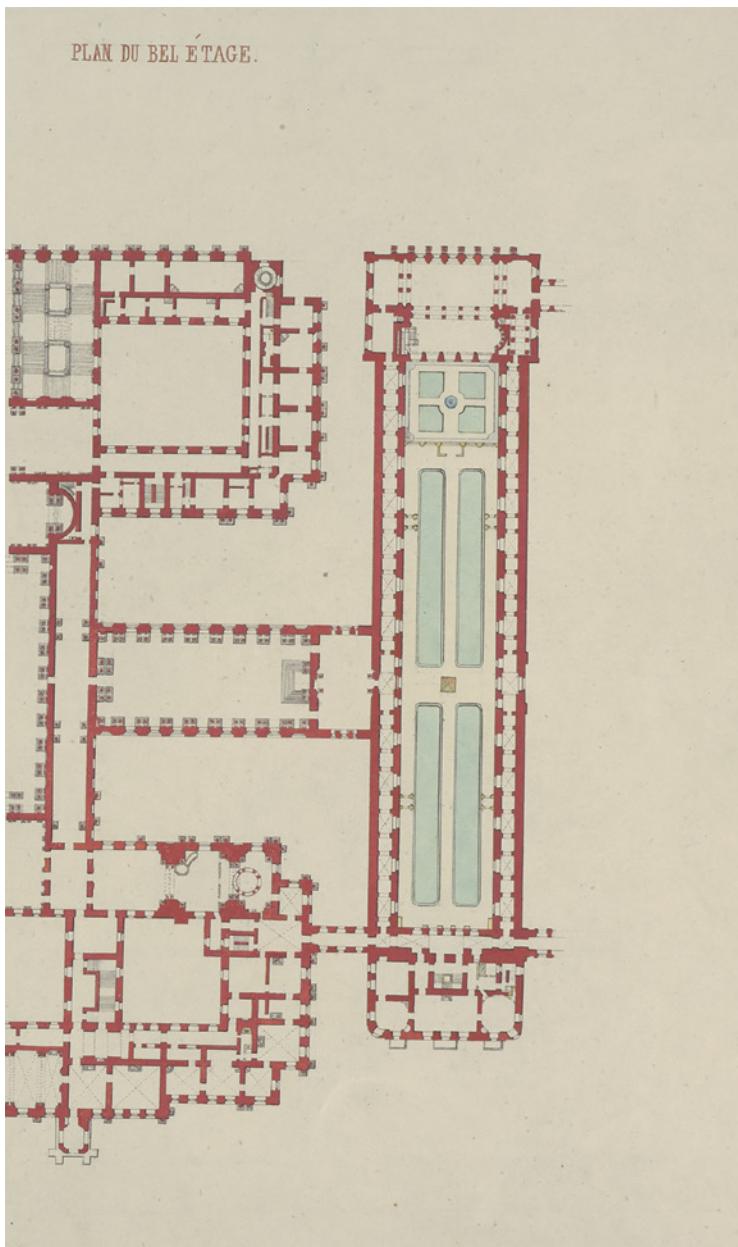


FIGURE 13.12 *Anon. artist, Plan of the Winter Palace (mid-nineteenth century). Pen, Indian ink, and watercolour on paper, 44 x 57 cm. St. Petersburg, Hermitage Museum (inv. no. OP-14454). Detail with the plan of the Small Hermitage.*

IMAGE © THE STATE HERMITAGE MUSEUM,  
ST. PETERSBURG; PHOTO: PAVEL DEMIDOV.

of a so-called *table volante*, which could be set with dishes on the lower floor and then elevated to the main floor above, once more connotes the absence of formal protocol. In the Russian context, this device was a key feature of all hermitages, from Peter the Great onwards, to the extent that in the Russian language the invention became known by the term “ermitage”.<sup>91</sup> The technical invention functioned as a *pars pro toto* of the hermitage as a space and its social function.

Count Ségar, who was minister plenipotentiary of the King of France at the court of St. Petersburg in the years 1784–1789, wrote extensively about his experiences at the court of Catherine the Great. His *Memoirs and Recollections* of 1824 contain a number of references to the Small Hermitage. He particularly mentioned the Italian atmosphere of the complex when he wrote that

the site of this hermitage rather contrasts with the name given to it; for one was struck, on entering it, with the grandeur of the apartments and galleries of which it was composed, with the splendour of its furniture, the great number of pictures from the first masters that adorned it, and the pleasant winter garden, where the verdure, the flowers, the chirping of birds, created the illusion of an Italian spring transported to the polar ice.<sup>92</sup>

The other crucial element of the Petersburg Hermitage was the gradual accumulation of a collection of objects and knowledge, which combined Pliny's concept of literary activities—of which the empress was especially fond—with the study of the arts and nature. As Catherine herself boasted, 'My museum in the Hermitage consists of, in addition to the paintings and the Raphael Loggia, 38,000 volumes, four rooms filled with books and engravings, 10,000 cut gemstones, nearly 10,000 drawings, and a natural history collection that occupies two large halls'.<sup>93</sup>

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Gottlieb, *Versuch einer Beschreibung der Russisch Kayserlichen Residenzstadt St. Petersburg* (St. Petersburg, Karl Wilhelm Müller: 1790) 59–60.

<sup>91</sup> Skodock C., *Barock in Russland: Zum Oeuvre des Hofarchitekten Francesco Bartolomeo Rastrelli* (Wiesbaden: 2006) 105–106.

<sup>92</sup> Ségar L.P. de, *Memoirs and Recollections of Count Segur* (London: 1827), vol. 3, 226.

<sup>93</sup> Levinson-Lessing V.F., *Istoriia kartinnoi galerei Ermitazha (1764–1917)* (Leningrad: 1985) 109 cited after Dianina K., "Art and Authority: The Hermitage of Catherine the Great", *Russian Review* 63, 4 (2004) 630–654, esp. 633.

### The Evolution of Early-Modern Visitor Etiquette

At this point, it should be asked why the typological form of the hermitage or *diaeta*, either as a semi-secluded part of the villa *suburbana* or as a separate apartment in the town palace, became so attractive in the early modern period, *in primis* for members of the Roman curia and more in general for the high nobility in Europe, and which factors led to the display of collections in this context. Why did this kind of separate space for the arts and letters start to develop within the villa in the sixteenth century, especially in Rome?

Firstly, the creation of specific retreats was a reaction to the fact that the villa became a *sine qua non* for any respected prelate at the papal court during this period. Whereas initially the villa had been exempt from protocol, during the cinquecento it became increasingly included in the itinerary of formal visits by popes, cardinals, and ambassadors, inevitably leading to a heightened formality of ceremony, even in this leisurely context.<sup>94</sup> The hermitage-*diaeta* offered the ultimate refuge from these increasing social restraints—as Pliny wrote, he considered this solitary apartment to be an escape from his work as a senator in Rome, a place where he could throw off his formal toga. In the early modern period, the *diaeta* in all its guises remained spatially very restricted, providing the privacy and concentration these high-profile prelates longed for.

Secondly, in the context of spaces for collecting, a general development might be discerned in which the private *studiolo*, a single small room which had been popular in the quattrocento and cinquecento for storing small artefacts and *naturalia*, was surpassed during the seicento by the *galleria*, a larger, public repository for collections of paintings and sculptures.<sup>95</sup> When we examine the protocol of viewing collections in these two spaces, the increasing social restrictions in viewing and discussing art become visible. The Renaissance *studiolo* was originally situated in or next to the bedroom (which was not yet part of a formal *parcours*) or, at least, it was located as far as possible from

94 This formalisation of the villa is exemplified in the long description of the trip to several villas in northern Lazio made by Gregory XIII in 1578, where the reception of the pope is extensively described; see Orbaan J.A.F., *Documenti sul barocco in Roma* (Rome: 1920) 366–388. For the formal use of (suburban) villas in the sixteenth century, see Coffin, *The Villa* 149–150. For the villa as exempt from social etiquette, see Cataneo Pietro, *I Quattro primi libri di architettura* (Venice, Figli di Aldo Manuzio: 1554) 46.

95 See Thornton D., *The Scholar in the Study: Ownership and Experience in Renaissance Italy* (New Haven, CT – London: 1997) and Prinz W., *Die Entstehung der Galerie in Frankreich und Italien* (Berlin: 1970).

the entrance of a city palace.<sup>96</sup> Because of the extremely limited size of most *studioli*, its owner could often only receive one or two people at a time. Access was allowed either to restricted circles of friends or to scholars who had been announced beforehand through humanist networks.<sup>97</sup> The storing of objects in cupboards meant that the visitor was not free to follow his own preferences; it was the owner who 'scripted' the visit, through his selection and explanation of certain objects. It is no coincidence that the verb 'to show' is predominant in contemporary descriptions of *studiolo* visits. Apart from that, many *studioli* and collections were visited while the owner was away, with a tour given by a servant, courtier, or librarian. In this way, those not equal in rank to the lord of the house gained entrance without having to subject themselves to a ceremonial context that would actually have prevented a viewing of the collection.<sup>98</sup>

In the late sixteenth century, the *studiolo* was gradually replaced by the larger space of the gallery as the main location for works of art.<sup>99</sup> As the gallery was generally located on the *piano nobile*, it did enforce a certain decorum upon its visitors; the formality of a gallery visit was also related to the fact that collections shown in these spaces were to demonstrate the 'grandezza, e magnificenza d'un gran Palazzo'.<sup>100</sup> However, what visitors saw here was not determined primarily or exclusively by their host, and the larger dimensions of the gallery made it possible for more people to admire the art works. This meant, on the one hand, that social hierarchy continued to play an important role in the gallery, while on the other hand it provided a location for discussions on the arts and sciences. These were held amongst equals—as the Venetian architect Vincenzo Scamozzi wrote in his treatise on architecture: 'Le gallerie sono luoghi da trattersi le persone nobili, e ricche, e passeggiare al coperto [...]'<sup>101</sup>

96 Liebenwein W, *Studiolo: Die Entstehung eines Raumtyps und seine Entwicklung bis um 1600* (Berlin: 1977) 128.

97 Findlen P, *Possessing Nature: Museums, Collecting and Scientific Culture in Early Modern Italy* (Berkeley, CA – Los Angeles, CA – London: 1994) 129–138 and Thornton, *The Scholar* 105–106 and 114–116.

98 Thornton, *The Scholar* 115.

99 Prinz, *Die Entstehung der Galerie*.

100 Ottonelli Giovanni Domenico – Cortona Pietro da, *Trattato della pittura, e scultura, uso, et abuso loro* (Florence, Giovanni Antonio Bonardi: 1652) 315: 'the grandeur and magnificence of a great House', cited after Strunck C., "Die Galerie in der Literatur: Historische Quellen zur Definition, architektonischen Gestalt, idealen Ausstattung und Funktion von Galerien", in Strunck C. – Kieven E. (eds.), *Europäische Galeriebauten—Galleries in a Comparative European Perspective (1400–1800)* (Munich: 2010) 9–32, esp. 24.

101 'Galleries are places where noble and rich persons can dwell and walk indoors [...]', Scamozzi, *L'idea* 305, cited after Prinz, *Die Entstehung der Galerie* 11.

Hermitages were places where the amount of works to be seen was restricted, thus leading to more focus, and where arts and sciences could be discussed unfettered by the restrictions of court hierarchy and ceremony. The Passionei villa-cum-hermitage is one of the most famous spots where an international intellectual élite could meet, and where all sorts of acquaintances transcending the social boundaries were made in the mid-eighteenth century. For example, it was here that Madame du Boccage could meet Winckelmann during her trip through Italy in the autumn of 1757, even though he was of decidedly lower social status.<sup>102</sup> Even more significant is what Winckelmann, who was often Passionei's guest in Frascati, wrote about his sojourns there. On 15 July 1757, while staying there, he wrote:

Ich kann mich rühmen, unter die Freunde des Herrn Cardinals aufgenommen zu seyn; denn diejenigen, welche er zu sich auf sein prächtiges Lusthaus bey Frascati einladet, werden dafür gehalten, und weil er niemals einen Fuß über jemandens Schwelle in Rom gesetzt und für eigen gehalten werden will, um von niemanden belästigt zu werden, so nimmt er niemanden auf, als der ihm gefällt; ja, er hat vor ein paar Jahren einem Cardinal, der seine Anstalten sehn wollen, und zuversichtlich bis Frascati gegangen war, von da er sich melden lassen, es rund abgeschlagen. Man ist mit einer Freyheit bei ihm, die ihres gleichen nicht hat; man muß in der Mütze und im Camisol bey der Tafel erscheinen, und die Conversation des Abends, ist einer Judenschule ähnlich, denn es will eine Predigerstimme seyn, den Cardinal zu überschreyen, und dennoch ist es geschehen, daß er übermannt wurde, und Unrecht haben mußte, wo er Recht hatte.<sup>103</sup>

<sup>102</sup> Tavernier L, "Winckelmann und die Villa Albani: Zur Descrizione della Villa dell'Emo Alessandro Albani", in Moisy S. von – Sichtermann H. – Tavernier T. (eds.), *Johann Joachim Winckelmann: Unbekannte Schriften. Antiquarische Relationen und Beschreibung der Villa Albani* (Munich: 1987) 69–114, esp. 82 note 68.

<sup>103</sup> Winckelmann, *Briefe*, vol. 1, 289: 'I can boast that I have been admitted to the Cardinal's circle of friends; then those whom he invites to his wonderful villa near Frascati are counted amongst them and, as he has never crossed the threshold of anyone else's house in Rome because he wishes to maintain his freedom and not be bothered by anyone in return, he only admits those he likes. Some years ago he refused to admit even a cardinal who wanted to see his home, and who had already travelled to Frascati, from where he had himself announced. One enjoys a complete and incomparable freedom in his presence: one is obliged to appear at dinner dressed in nightcap and nightshirt, and the evening conversation seems like a disorderly crowd. One needs the voice of a preacher to outshout the Cardinal, and still it has happened that he was subdued and had to admit

In other words, the spatial and social context of the Frascati villa did not enforce the habitual respect towards the host (or, even more important, of the host towards unwanted guests). On the contrary, it was the host who enforced upon his guests the abandonment of formal protocol in matters of dress and behaviour, so as to allow complete freedom of speech. Passionei even admitted his friends into his own carriage on the journey there, as many references in Winckelmann's letters attest, as a result of which other rules of etiquette were also breached.<sup>104</sup>

### Hermitages and *conversazioni*

The habit of receiving guests irrespective of their social status was also introduced within the city of Rome in the latter half of the eighteenth century; the informal etiquette of hermitages (which had been introduced in the Mancini, Altieri, and Colonna palaces) was thus also becoming customary in a more public context. These events were called *conversazioni*, a concept similar to the French term *salon*, which had already been employed to describe the gatherings in Passionei's hermitage. This term was used by Lelarge to refer to the meetings of artists, scientists, and prelates in the cardinal's library of the hermitage:

Les conversations s'y font à des heures réglées. Mais quels agréments dans ces conversations! L'érudition, la délicatesse, et l'énjouement du maître, en font l'âme: également instructives, et amusantes, en délassant l'esprit, elles le disposent, et le rendent plus propre au travail. Rapportez, monsieur, à tant d'avantages, dont on jouit dans une si belle solitude, tout ce qui aura pu vous plaire dans mes lettres.<sup>105</sup>

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his wrong, even when he was right'. A similar account is given in a letter of the same day to another recipient, see *ibidem* 290.

<sup>104</sup> See *Ibidem* 285 and 287. For the etiquette of carriages, see Hunt J.M., "Carriages, Violence, and Masculinity in Early Modern Rome", *I Tatti: Studies in the Italian Renaissance* 17 (2014) 175–196.

<sup>105</sup> Lelarge cited by Galletti, *Memorie* 176: 'Conversations are held here at regular hours. But what agreeable conversations! The erudition, the delicacy and the playfulness of the master constitute its soul: they are just as instructive as they are amusing, and while soothing the intellect, they arrange it and put it to work. Recount to me, monsieur, in view of all these benefits which one enjoys in such wonderful solitude, all that might have pleased you in my letters'.

In the urban context of Rome, these salons functioned as the liminal space between the nobility and Grand Tourists and in this context strict etiquette also gradually crumbled.<sup>106</sup> During the reign of Benedict XIV, *conversazioni* had been held in Rome, but were still rather formal and more serious in tone, as Count Marco Fantuzzi noted, while these events became more *mondain* from the 1770s onwards.<sup>107</sup> These salons followed a rather fixed pattern. Prelates received both Roman nobles and foreign visitors in the early evenings—hence the term *conversazioni di prima serata*; ladies of the higher nobility organised *conversazioni di seconda serata*, taking place later in the evening.<sup>108</sup> The *prime serate* in cardinals' residences lasted two hours at the most, and French visitors noted that 'Dans ces sortes d'assemblées, où il ne faut pas croire che tout le monde soit reçu indistinctement, il regne beaucoup de liberté, mais qui n'ôte rien à la décence'.<sup>109</sup> *Prime serate* could also be hosted by members of the middle class or *mezze dame* of the lower nobility. These events were the more interesting, as here the rules of etiquette were less strict than in the salons of the higher nobility.<sup>110</sup> Cardinals and other prelates frequented these occasions, and here they could meet tourists, literati, artists, and antiquarians.<sup>111</sup>

<sup>106</sup> Montègre G., *La Rome des Français au temps des Lumières: Capitale de l'Antique et carrefour de l'Europe, 1769–1791* (Rome: 2011) 101–126.

<sup>107</sup> Donato M.P., 'I salotti romani del Settecento: il ruolo femminile tra politica e cultura', in Betri M.L. – Brambilla E. (eds.), *Salotti e ruolo femminile in Italia tra fine Seicento e primo Novecento* (Venice: 2004) 189–212.

<sup>108</sup> Montègre, *La Rome des Français* 104–105.

<sup>109</sup> Richard Jerome, *Description historique et critique de l'Italie, ou Nouveau Mémoires* (Dijon – Paris, François des Ventes – Saillant: 1766), vol. 5, 143: 'in this kind of assemblies, where one should not assume that everyone is equally received, there reigns much liberty, which, however, does not detract from their decorum'. See also Donato M.P., 'The Temple of Female Glory: Female Self-affirmation in the Roman Salon of the Grand Tour', in Findlen P. – Wassyng Roworth, W. – Sama C.M. (eds.), *Italy's Eighteenth Century: Gender and Culture in the Age of the Grand Tour* (Stanford, CA: 2009) 59–78, 360–366, esp. 361 note 14.

<sup>110</sup> Montègre, *La Rome des Français* 114–115.

<sup>111</sup> Lalande Jerome, *Voyage d'un François en Italie fait dans les années 1765 et 1766* (Paris, Desaint: 1769), vol. 5, 147–148: 'Les assemblées appelées *Conversazioni* sont à Rome la principale ressource des étrangers et le principal amusement dans une ville où il n'y a de spectacle que pendant une fort petite partie de l'année. Les conversations qui commencent à l'*Ave Maria*, ou à 24 heures, c'est-à-dire, à nuit tombante, s'appellent de *prima-sera*, ce sont celles des Dames qui ne sont pas de la première noblesse *mezze-Dame*; mais chez qui vont cependant quelquefois les Cardinaux et les personnes du premier rang'.—'These gatherings called *Conversazioni* are the principal resort for strangers and the main diversion in a city where there are no performances than during a very short time of year.'

This meant that the *prime serate*, in particular, became a time and place where one could become acquainted with intellectuals without the protocol of formal etiquette. There was not a complete lack of formal rules, but people were liberated from particular constraints. As Abbé Jerome Richard described it,

Le gros de l'Assemblée se tient ordinairement dans une galerie vaste, décorée et bien illuminée. Il y a des autres pieces où l'on peut passer après avoir rendu ses hommages au Cardinal chez lequel on va en conversation; on est fort le maître de s'asseoir, de se promener, de causer avec qui l'on veut.<sup>112</sup>

What was missing in these Roman *prime serate* was the explicit predominance of learning, literature and the arts, which constituted a crucial element in Passionei's and Albani's gatherings in their villa-*diaeta*-hermitage, and which was similar to Parisian examples such as Crozat's weekly assemblies during which the scholarly discussion of the arts had been the primary activity.<sup>113</sup> In Rome, however, this was part of the informal, and slightly more public, academic culture. This element of erudition once more became central in St. Petersburg; Catherine's Small Hermitage was conceived, not just for the purpose of liberation from stifling etiquette, but also for her collection. Before this addition to the Winter Palace was built, Catherine's first acquisitions of art (starting in 1764 with 225 paintings of the Gotzkowsky collection) were installed in seven rooms in the mezzanine of the southwestern corner of this residence.<sup>114</sup> Access to these spaces was severely restricted, because it was entered through the imperial suite and via a narrow staircase.<sup>115</sup> Small groups gathered in these rooms during the evening, playing cards or other games.

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Conversations begin at *Ave Maria* or at 24 hours, which is to say, at nightfall, and are called *prima-sera*; these are of ladies that are not of the principal nobility, the *mezze-dame*; but sometimes also cardinals and persons of the highest rank come here'.

<sup>112</sup> Richard, *Description historique* 143: 'The majority of these gatherings are normally held in vast galleries, decorated and well illuminated; there are other rooms where one can go for a conversation after having paid one's homage to the Cardinal; one can decide for oneself whether one is going to sit down, wander about, or talk to whomsoever one prefers'.

<sup>113</sup> Ziskin R., *Sheltering Art: Collecting and Social Identity in Early Eighteenth-century Paris* (University Park, PA: 2012) 156–161.

<sup>114</sup> Skodock C., "Zwei kaiserliche Sammlungen in St. Petersburg im 18. Jahrhundert: Die Kunstkammer Peters I. und die Anfänge der Staatlichen Eremitage unter Katharina II", *Museen und fürstliche Sammlungen im 18. Jahrhundert* (Brunswick: 2007) 17–22, esp. 20.

<sup>115</sup> Ibidem 21. Guseva, "Catherine's Apartments"<sup>107</sup> strangely enough dates the decoration of the Winter Palace apartment only after the building of the Small Hermitage.

It was only when the collection grew and Catherine 'formalised' these informal events that the Small Hermitage was built by Georg Friedrich Velten and Jean Baptiste de la Mothe in the late 1760s.<sup>116</sup> The relocation of the art collection to these spaces will also have codetermined to a certain extent the contents of the conversations held there. Catherine herself also steered towards this subject through the regular performance of concerts and plays, and the reading of literature—which imitated the agendas of literary academies in other European cities such as Rome.

The Small Hermitage offered room for events not governed by strict court ceremonial on three different levels, where the decreasing number of participants signified a growing liberty in behaviour. The most public of these events was the so-called 'Great Hermitage', during which 'all distinguished persons of both genders' were invited, up to a thousand; then followed the 'Medium Hermitage' which, just like the Great Hermitage, consisted of an opera or ballet followed by a ball and banquet, but with more restricted access, and the 'Petite Hermitage', which was completely different in character, as it was only open to intimate friends. These latter evenings were referred to as 'conversations', so akin to the French examples.<sup>117</sup> As Gustav III of Sweden mentioned in a letter to the empress written shortly after their meeting in 1777, he could imagine 'Vous voir encore dans l'Hermitage debout devant le grand canapé, le Prince Repnin assis et causant avec Vous [...]', in which he must have described the 'Petite Hermitage', and where the reversal of normal etiquette can be clearly observed.<sup>118</sup>

This aspect of social behaviour for which the Small Hermitage was built was also formulated by the empress herself, in the form of ten rules of behaviour that, paradoxically, strictly regulated the atmosphere of informality. Some of these admonitions are remarkably close to the conduct displayed by modern-day museum visitors:

1. All ranks shall be left outside the doors, similarly hats, and particularly swords.
2. Orders of precedence and haughtiness, and anything of such like which might result from them, shall be left at the doors.

<sup>116</sup> See Skodock, "Zwei kaiserliche Sammlungen" 21 and Korsunova M.F., *Jurij Fel'ten* (Leningrad: 1988) 9–11.

<sup>117</sup> Dianina, "Art and Authority" 646–647.

<sup>118</sup> Proschwitz G. von, *Catherine II et Gustave III: Une correspondance retrouvée* (Stockholm: 1989) 101: 'seeing you again in the Hermitage, standing in front of the large settee, Prince Repnin seated and conversing with you [...].'

4. Be seated, stand or walk as it best pleases you, regardless of others.
5. Speak with moderation and not too loudly, so that others present have not an earache or headache.<sup>119</sup>

The rules that Catherine the Great invented had been in practice in the Roman context for some time; just like these *conversazioni*, the Small Hermitage offered a context that predisposed its visitors—some of whom were already familiar with these kinds of events in Paris or Rome—to the enjoyment and contemplation of the visual and performance arts, and the study of literature and philosophy.<sup>120</sup> The Hermitage gatherings were, as was also noted, a salon in which the local nobility could meet foreign visitors and ambassadors and, as such, very similar to the developments in Rome.<sup>121</sup> Thus, the hermitage-cum-*diaeta* in St. Petersburg was a location where social hierarchy and boundaries fell away in the mutual admiration of art and encyclopaedic knowledge, while on the other hand, it was and remained an exclusive and 'private' space where only the empress decided who was admitted and who was not, prescribing rules of a new sort of decorum for all its participants.

## Conclusion

Considered from the perspective of the hermitage, the villa, and the *diaeta*, the birth of the modern museum around 1800 presents a gradual development; the concept of the museum did not simply result from the social struggle of a bourgeoisie *avant la lettre* striving for power.<sup>122</sup> Thus, this phenomenon did not come about as the result of social rupture, representing a revolutionary means of constructing a new public sphere, as has been argued for example by Hooper-Greenhill.<sup>123</sup> Nor was this new institution a mere 'Bildungsideal und Bauaufgabe', striving for rational *prodesse et delectare*,

<sup>119</sup> Dianina, "Art and Authority" 649 and Piotrovski M., "Catherine II: Empress of All the Russians", in *Treasures of Catherine the Great* (London – St. Petersburg: 2000) 15–17.

<sup>120</sup> For the interpretation of the Hermitage as essentially a collection, see Zykov N.L., "Der Erwerb der Sammlungen Gotzkowsky und von Brühl durch Katharina II.: Die Anfänge der kaiserlichen Eremitage", in *Russen und Deutsche II: Essays* (Petersberg: 2012) 182–191 and Restellini M., *L'Ermitage: la naissance du musée impérial. Les Romanov, tsars collectionneurs* (Paris: 2011).

<sup>121</sup> Dianina, "Art and Authority" 646.

<sup>122</sup> Savoy, *Tempel der Kunst*.

<sup>123</sup> Hooper-Greenhill E., *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge* (London: 1992).

through which the higher classes during the nineteenth century confirmed and legitimized their social position.<sup>124</sup> To the contrary, the modern museum was just as much a logical outcome of a tradition that originated in the *ancien régime*—it was the ruling class that actually started to break down social boundaries in order to freely discuss the arts and literature, creating a space that allowed for sociability without hierarchical constraints. Rooms beyond protocol became spaces where new forms of sociability were tested and developed.

Discussions of the supposed ‘birth’ of the museum as building, collection, or institution have omitted another important element that developed within the hermitage: namely the disengaged observation of objects as both historical and timeless examples. This kind of consideration of art is not very different from the spiritual forms of understanding gained through contemplation and meditation which had been developed in the Christian tradition, and for which the hermitage had long been the ideal location. From this perspective of the *vita contemplativa*, the rise of aesthetics as a discipline of philosophy raises important questions for both the history of art and the history of museums.

In this context, the suggestion made by Donald Preziosi that, first of all, there exists no such thing as a clean break between the pre- and post-Enlightenment systems of knowledge, agrees with the long-term development we can discern in the function of the hermitage prolonging itself in the modern museum. Moreover, his observation that the history of art (and thus also the interpretation of art within the walls of a museum) rests on a double epistemological framework, in which the art object is both an object of contemplation as part of history and something beyond history, can also be related to this long-term view. Preziosi relates that, during the eighteenth century, there occurred a shift from ‘theological aestheticism’ (meaning an aesthetic perception based on theological concepts) to ‘secular theologism’ (intending a theology deprived of its Christian dogmas). In the context of the modern museum and art history, objects are not only placed in a rational framework of chronology and style, but also regarded as an immediate and unmediated experience of ‘divine’ creativity.<sup>125</sup> Such an interpretation of art is akin to the religious meditation on

<sup>124</sup> Gaehtgens T., “Das Museum um 1800: Bildungsideal und Bauaufgabe”, in Griener P. (ed.), *Klassizismen und Kosmopolitismus: Programm oder Problem? Austausch in Kunst und Kunstdtheorie im 18. Jahrhundert* (Zürich: 2004) 137–162; Brugnoli, *Dal privato al pubblico* 161; Bennett T., *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London – New York, NY: 1995).

<sup>125</sup> Preziosi D., *Brain of the Earth's Body: Art, Museums and the Phantasms of Modernity* (Minneapolis, MN – London: 2003) 29–35.

the history of Salvation; the Life of Christ happened centuries ago, but mediational practice makes it appear timeless and immediate before the beholder's eyes; and images have always played an important role in this devotional process.<sup>126</sup> Since, as Preziosi notes, the 'confrontation between art object and beholder finds no easy parallel in other historical and critical practices in the secular corners of modern life', we might trace this kind of secular meditation to the hermitage as one of the origins of the modern museum decorum.<sup>127</sup>

In fact, the modern-day experience of art in the museum context has been likened to a spiritual experience by Csikszentmihalyi through his concept of flow, meaning by this a prolonged visual consideration of the work of art, in which it opens up before the beholder.<sup>128</sup> This is also consistent with the terminology often used in describing the experience of art as a form of secular meditation; it can be connected with the act of contemplation of the solitary artist, which represents the crux of Romantic theories of art.<sup>129</sup> In the earliest museums, even those opening up to the general public such as Schinkel's Altes Museum in Berlin, cabinets offered the more cultured public the possibility of retreating for the 'silent contemplation' of the works on display.<sup>130</sup> It also agrees with the complaint voiced by Wilhelm Wackenroder and Ludwig Tieck in their *Herzensergießungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders* (*Outpourings of an Art-Loving Friar*) of 1797, where the loud comportment of the disinterested general public ruined the contemplation of art as a new aesthetic religion:

Bildersäle werden betrachtet als Jahrmärkte, wo man neue Waaren im Vorübergehen beurtheilt, lobt und verachtet; und es sollten Tempel seyn, wo man in stiller und schweigender Demuth, und in herzerhebender Einsamkeit, die großen Künstler, als die höchsten unter den Irdischen, bewundern, und mit der langen, unverwandten Betrachtung ihrer Werke,

<sup>126</sup> See for example Melion W.S. – Palmer Wandell L., *Image and Incarnation: The Early Modern Doctrine of the Pictorial Image* (Leiden: 2015) and Dekoninck R. – Guiderdoni A. – Granjon E. (eds.), *Fiction sacrée: Spiritualité et esthétique durant le premier âge moderne* (Louvain: 2013).

<sup>127</sup> Preziosi, *Brain of the Earth's Body* 33.

<sup>128</sup> Csikszentmihalyi M. – Robinson R.E., *The Art of Seeing: An Interpretation of the Aesthetic Encounter* (Los Angeles, CA: 1990).

<sup>129</sup> Stefano E. di, "Leone Battista Alberti e l'estetica della contemplazione", in La Brasca F. – Trottmann C. (eds.), *Vie solitaire, vie civile: L'Humanisme de Pétrarque à Alberti* (Paris: 2011) 451.

<sup>130</sup> Meijers D.J., "Das Galeriepublikum: Momente seiner Genese 1625–1800", in Husslein-Arco A. – Natter T.G. (eds.), *Fürstenglanz: Die Macht der Pracht* (Vienna: 2016) 35–45, esp. 40–43.

in dem Sonnenglanze der entzückendsten Gedanken und Empfindungen sich erwärmen möchte. Ich vergleiche den Genuß der edleren Kunstwerke dem Gebet.<sup>131</sup>

So, the hermitage belongs to the string of concepts of studio, cabinet, galleria, and museum; but it adds something new to the rational goals of factual knowledge and classification that are contained in these other terms, namely the spiritual element of secular religion. Thus, the hermitage offered a new orientation towards aesthetics starting from the practice of contemplation, to which was added that of conversation and new forms of behaviour. Through a paradoxical combination of elements, the hermitage-*diaeta-villa* has laid the basis for the 'sociable form of solitude' that still conditions the ritual behaviour of museum visitors and which enables them to focus on a direct and immediate experience of the work of art; they create an imaginary hermitage in which they are alone with the object.

Catherine the Great's advice to 'Be seated, stand or walk as it best pleases you, regardless of others' therefore opened up the possibility to behave in a solitary way, even in company, which was derived from prior developments in building collections and receiving guests in the European context. Each and every visitor to a museum is a temporary hermit, contemplating beauty, the visible world, and its metaphysical meanings, and thus a participant in the 'modern religion' of art. The hermitage is part and parcel of a long-term development that is rooted within the courts of the ruling élites and their practices of collecting and, extending itself to the present day, furnishes an important missing link in the proto-history of the modern museum.

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<sup>131</sup> Wackenroder Wilhelm Heinrich – Tieck Ludwig, *Herzensergießungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders* (Berlin, Unger: 1797) 158: 'Galleries are considered as fairs where the newest merchandise is judged, praised and criticised in passing; they should be temples where one should admire, in silent humility and in heart-uplifting solitude, the greatest artists as the noblest amongst mortals. Here one should warm oneself with the sunshine of the most enchanting thoughts and experiences through the long, direct contemplation of their works. I compare the enjoyment of the noble works of art with prayers'.

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# A Solitude of Permeable Boundaries: The Abbey of La Trappe between Isolation and Engagement\*

*Mette Birkedal Bruun*

Seventeenth-century French *dévots* cherished *solitude* as the locus *par excellence* of sincere devotion. It could be a *locus amoenus* or a *locus horribilis*—a desert, a forest, a garden, or a *cabinet*. It could be material or interior; institutionalised or ephemeral; a place of repose or of hard work.<sup>1</sup> *Solitude* facilitates religious focus; it leaves man alone with temptation and alone with God and offers a space for the devout to forge their souls. Whereas Marguerite de La Sablière avers that it is necessary to separate oneself from the world, and in

\* This article is based on research that is presented in my book *The Unfamiliar Familiar: Armand-Jean de Rancé (1626–1700) between Withdrawal and Engagement* (Copenhagen: 2017). La Trappe is one of the eight places studied in my collective cross-disciplinary project *SOLITUDES: Withdrawal and Engagement in the Long Seventeenth Century* (2013–2017), which is funded by the European Research Council and housed by the Department of Church History, University of Copenhagen. In *SOLITUDES* we examine the ways in which the demand that the Christian be in the world, but not of the world is manifested at four German Lutheran sites and four French Catholic sites, and the ways in which this manifestation is prompted, sustained, and represented in images, texts, architecture, and music; for a presentation of the project, see Bruun M.B. – Havsteen S.R. – Mejrup K. – Nagelsmit E. – Nørgaard L., “General Introduction”, *Journal of Early Modern Christianity* 1, 2 (2014) 195–205 and “Withdrawal and Engagement in the Long Seventeenth Century: Four Case Studies”, *Journal of Early Modern Christianity* 1, 2 (2014) 249–343. Sincere thanks are due to my four colleagues for stimulating discussions and joint exploration of the concepts of *solitude*, *Absonderung* et al. and the genres and materials in which they are rehearsed.

1 For seventeenth-century religious *solitudes*, see Beugnot B., *Loin du monde et du bruit: Le discours de la retraite au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (2nd ed. Paris: 2015 [1996]) 209–256; idem, “Loisir, retraite, solitude: de l'espace privé à la littérature”, in Fumaroli M. – Salazar P.-J. – Bury E. (eds.), *Le loisir lettré à l'âge classique* (Geneva: 1996) 173–195; idem, “Y a-t-il une problématique féminine de la retraite?”, in Leiner W. (ed.), *Onze études sur l'image de la femme dans la littérature française du dix-septième siècle* (Tübingen: 1978) 29–49; Beauvalet-Boutouyrie S., *La solitude: XVII<sup>e</sup>–XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: 2008); Schueren É. van der, *Les sociétés et les déserts de l'âme dans la France du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Brussels: 2001); Naudin P., *L'expérience et le sentiment de la solitude dans la littérature française de l'aube des Lumières à la Révolution* (Paris: 1995); Stanton D., “The Ideal of ‘repos’ in Seventeenth-Century French Literature”, *L'Esprit Créateur* 15 (1975) 79–104.

some manner from oneself, in order to listen to God in one's retreat,<sup>2</sup> Pierre Nicole describes *solitude* as a place fit for self-scrutiny, since the self-images formed in solitude are so much more sombre than those supported by exterior objects.<sup>3</sup>

The *grand siècle* saw a proliferation of manuals of withdrawal. Works from across the entire devotional spectrum offered modulations of the religious *topos* of *solitude* in tenors ranging from the contemplative to the programmatic,<sup>4</sup> and while in the beginning of the century, *solitude* was the locus of monks, nuns, and saints, the injunction to seek solitude was gradually integrated into general devotion. Handbooks outlined monastic, ecclesiastic, and female retreat of a week or ten days; guidelines prescribed interior withdrawal complete with spiritual exercises and prayers;<sup>5</sup> catechisms sought to integrate retreat into the regular devotional programme,<sup>6</sup> and the hagiographical

2 'Il faut nous séparer du monde, et en quelque façon de nous-mêmes, pour écouter Dieu dans la retraite' La Sablière Marguerite de, *Maxime* 76, in d'Elbenne M., *Madame de la Sablière: ses pensées chrétiennes et ses lettres à l'abbé de Rancé* (Paris: 1923) 259.

3 'On a beau s'occuper de soi-même dans la solitude, les images que l'on s'en forme sont infinitement plus sombres que celles qui sont aidées par les objets extérieurs'. Nicole Pierre, 'De la connaissance de soi-même', in *Essais de Morale contenus en divers traités sur plusieurs devoirs importans* (Paris, Guillaume Desprez and Jean Desessartz: 1714 [1671]), vol. 3, 9; the self-confrontation inherent in *solitude* is also mentioned in Rohan Marie-Eléonore de, *La Morale du Sage* (Paris, Claude Barbin: 1667) 80–81; I owe this reference to Rowan M., 'The Song of Songs in Conventional Discourse', *Papers on French Seventeenth-Century Literature* 22 (1995) 109–117, at 117.

4 As we delve into *solitude*, let us not forget Bossuet's protest that a truly devout life does not depend on isolation from society; Régent A. – Laurent N., *Sermons de Bossuet: Le Carême du Louvre* (Neuilly: 2002) 153; for Bossuet's injunction to a 'monastic spirit' within the world, see Le Brun J., *La spiritualité de Bossuet prédateur* (Paris: 2002) 190–198.

5 See, for example, Georges de Brebeuf's *Entretiens solitaires, ou prières et méditations pieuses* (1660), the third Order Franciscan Jean de Bernières's plan for a detailed ten-day retreat in *Le chrétien interieur* (1661), the fourth book of which is dedicated to *Solitude*; the Capuchin Bernardin de Paris published *Le Religieux, ou le Chrestien en solitude* and *La Religieuse dans son cloître* (1678); the hermit Hubert Jaspart wrote *Solitude interieure dans laquelle le solitaire fidèle, comme aussi tout Chrestien [...] trouvera le moyen d'estre, vivre, mourir et operer en Dieu* (1678); the Jesuit François Guilloré, *Retraite pour les dames* (1685); the Ursuline Marie de l'Incarnation, *Méditations et Retraites* (1687); finally, Quesnel's *Le bonheur de la mort chrétienne: Retraite de huit jours* (1689) describes a retreat centring on meditations on death.

6 In his catechism, Abbé Cerné encourages believers to retreat on an annual and monthly basis in order to revive the fervour through meditation, silence, and 'la Retraite interieure', *Le pédagogie des familles chrestiennes: Contenant un Recueil de plusieurs Instructions sur diuères Matieres. [...] Vtiles aux Curez et autres Ecclesiastiques, pour s'acquiter de leur devoir: Aux Chefs*

commonplace of the home as a 'little monastery' came to prevail.<sup>7</sup> From the mid-century, and in parallel with a surge in conversions, devout believers adopted the practice of week-long retreats to abbeys and convents,<sup>8</sup> settling on the fringes of abbeys<sup>9</sup> or withdrawing permanently to their homes.<sup>10</sup>

De Sales introduced a *solitude* which was available everywhere. It had little in common with the untamed primeval Egyptian wilderness, and explicitly offered an alternative to the retreats of Anthony and Mary of Egypt.<sup>11</sup> Nonetheless Thebes maintained its appeal. In his translation of the lives of the desert fathers (male and female), Robert Arnauld d'Andilly (1589–1674) reminds his readers

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*de Familles pour l'instruction de leurs Enfans et Domestiques, et à toutes sortes de Personnes qui veulent viure selon Dieu* (Paris, Pierre de Bresche: 1662) 299–300.

7 According to Diefendorf, this topos is a cliché in biographies of devout women from the late sixteenth century onwards; Diefendorf B., *From Penitence to Charity: Pious Women and the Catholic Reformation in Paris* (Oxford – New York, NY: 2004) 4. Nevertheless, repetition of such *topoi* need not deprive them of substance.

8 In the seventeenth chapter of her reflections on the *Imitatio Christi* Mlle de Montpensier professes: 'toute ma vie j'ai frequenté les Convens, et que j'ai toujours compris combien ce commerce estoit utile aux gens du monde qui veulent quelquefois se retirer'.—'I have frequented convents all my life, and I have always understood the benefits of such frequentation for people of the world who wish to withdraw occasionally'. "Reflexions morales et chretiennes sur le premier livre de l'Imitation de Jesus-Christ", in Anon. [Le Tourneux Nicolas], *De l'Imitation de Jesus-Christ, Traduction nouvelle : Avec des reflexions morales et Chretiennes, sur le premier Livre. Dedié à Son Altesse Royale Madame de Guise* (Paris, Elie Josset: 1694) 389–459, at 421.

9 Mention may be made of the *solitaires* at Port-Royal des Champs or *aristocrates* such as Mlle de Guise who regularly withdrew to her apartment in the Abbey of Saint-Pierre at Montmartre. Others hovered on the very boundary of the monastery. One of the most prominent examples is Mme de Sablé who, in 1655, had an apartment constructed adjoining Port-Royal de Paris that was entered from the street and opened to a balcony in the convent church; Lafond J., "Madame de Sablé et son salon", in Lafond J. – Mesnard J. (eds.), *Images de La Rochefoucauld* (Paris: 1984) 201–216, at 205.

10 For Louis-Charles d'Albert, duc de Luynes's paradigmatic retreat, see Quantin J.-L., "Paradoxes of Christian Solitude in the Seventeenth Century", *Journal of Early Modern Christianity* 1, 2 (2014) 219–231.

11 Sales François de, *Introvdction a la vie devote* (Paris, l'imprimerie royale du Louvre: 1641 [1609/1619]) 280; see also Mérot A., *Retraites mondaines: Aspects de la décoration intérieure à Paris, au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: 1990) 114. For de Sales's representation of an interior world in which the believer may live a rich and fruitful life which renders the activities of the exterior world 'largely automatized', see Lyons J., *Before Imagination: Embodied Thought from Montaigne to Rousseau* (Palo Alto, CA: 2005) 77–80, at 78; for the variety of seventeenth-century interior spaces, see Papasogli B., *Le 'fond du cœur': figures de l'espace intérieur au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: 2000) 203–229.

that the saintly desert dwellers are models not only for monks and nuns but also for lay people, and he adds that the desert saints' fates are congenial to the penitential form of life prescribed by the Council of Trent.<sup>12</sup> The wish to reach a broader public is a commonplace in contemporary prefaces to translations of Greek, essentially monastic, fathers.<sup>13</sup> That this ambition was not a vain one is indicated by Mme de Sévigné's reference to her reading of the Lives of the desert fathers<sup>14</sup> and Armand-Jean de Rancé's letters to Mme de Lafayette and Mme de Guise, the king's cousin, in which he expresses joy in their appreciation

<sup>12</sup> See the preface to Arnauld d'Andilly's translation, *Les vies des Saints Peres des deserts et de quelques saintes, escriptes par des peres de l'Eglise et autres Anciens Auteurs Ecclesiastiques* (4th ed. Paris, Pierre le Petit: 1657 [1647]) 37–60, at 42; Armand-Jean de Rancé also underlines the general applicability of Dorotheus of Gaza's instructions in the preface to his translation *Les instructions de Saint Dorothee père de l'église grecque, Et Abbé d'un Monastere de la Palestine, traduites de Grec en François* (Paris, François Muguet: 1686); Bosuet recommends *Les vies des Saints Pères des désert* as equally saintly and delightful ('également saint et délicieux') and a book to be read alongside Fleury's *L'Histoire ecclésiastique* in his letter to Mme Cornuau of 14 May 1695; Urbain Ch. – Levesque E. (eds.), *Correspondance de Bossuet: Nouvelle édition augmentée*, 12 vols. (Paris: 1909–1920), vol. 7, 88.

<sup>13</sup> Calvet-Sebasti M.-A., "La traduction française des Pères grecs", in Bury E. – Meunier B. (eds.), *Les Pères de l'Église au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: 1993) 337–354, at 339 note 8 and 348–352.

<sup>14</sup> Letter from Mme de Sévigné to Mme de Grignan of 26 November 1684; Gérard-Gailly E. (ed.), *Madame de Sévigné: Lettres*, 3 vols. (Paris: 1953–1957), vol. 3, 37; the editor identifies the edition as d'Andilly's *La vie des pères des Déserts; Lettres*, vol. 3, 910. Some readers took a more romantic approach. On 5 August 1684, Sévigné sent her son a report concerning Mlle de Mauron, who turned all her love to God. In accordance with her high-strung nature, the said lady's reason could not keep up with the ardour of the zeal and charity that had seized her, and in order to satisfy her Magdalenian heart, she desired to profit from good examples and pious readings in the lives of the holy desert fathers and the penitential saints. She wanted, Sévigné declares, to be the Don Quixote of these admirable stories: 'Mais comme tout s'étoit extreme dans cette créature, sa tête n'a pas pu soutenir l'excès du zèle et de l'ardente charité dont elle étoit possédée; et pour contenter ce cœur de Madeleine, elle a voulu profiter des bons exemples et des bonnes lectures de la vie des saints Pères du Désert, et des saintes pénitentes. Elle a voulu être le *don Quichotte* de ces admirables histoires'. Mlle de Mauron set out for Rouen, where she meant to embark a vessel bound for India and a life à la Mary of Egypt. '[C]est là', Sévigné informs her son, 'où Dieu l'appelle, c'est où elle veut faire pénitence, c'est où elle a vu, sur la carte, les endroits qui l'invitent à finir sa vie sous le sac et sur la cendre, c'est là où l'abbé Zosime la viendra communier quand elle mourra'.—'This is where God called her, this is where she wanted to do penitence; this is where she had found, on the map, places inviting her to finish there her life in sackcloth and ashes; this is where ultimately abbot Zosimas would offer her the last Communion'. She was, however, found in Rouen and brought back. Letter from Mme de Sévigné to Charles Sévigné of 5 August 1684; *Lettres*, vol. 2, 952–953.

of his translation of Dorotheus of Gaza's instructions, and applauds Mme de Guise's endeavour to practise what she has read.<sup>15</sup>

The translator who praised Mme de Guise's imitation of the desert was quite the specialist. Armand-Jean le Bouthillier de Rancé (1626–1700) was abbot of La Trappe, which was one of the principal religious *solitudes* in late seventeenth-century France. The Cistercian abbey, situated in the forest of Perche some 150 kilometres west of Paris, had led an inconspicuous life since its foundation in 1140.<sup>16</sup> But from 1663, Rancé's penitential regime brought fame to the place: La Trappe came to connote lustre akin to fashionable houses such as the Carmelite convent in the Faubourg St. Jacques, and austerity on a par with the Grande Chartreuse in its alpine isolation.

The fame of Trappist<sup>17</sup> *solitude* is unthinkable without the biographical foil of Rancé's conversion. The abbot grew up in a clan of *créatures de Richelieu* with close ties to Port-Royal and the Oratory and with the chief minister as his godfather.<sup>18</sup> From the age of eleven he was commendatory abbot of five abbeys from different orders which he did not visit for the next twenty-two years,<sup>19</sup> and until his mid-thirties he divided his time between an education aimed at an ecclesiastical career and a life spent among *frondeurs* and *salonnieres*. He entertained close connections with the duchesse de Montbazon, Marie d'Avaugour (1610/12–1657), who was renowned for her beauty, her intrigues, and her open arms.<sup>20</sup> In 1656 Rancé became *premier aumônier* of Gaston d'Orléans; rumour

15 Letters from Rancé to Mme de Guise of 13 August 1686 and to Mme de Lafayette of 12 December 1686; Rancé Armand-Jean de, *Correspondance*, ed. A.J. Krailsheimer, 4 vols. (Paris – Cîteaux: 1993), vol. 3, 375 and 416.

16 For the early history of La Trappe, see Bell D.N., *The Library of the Abbey of La Trappe: A Study of Its History from the Twelfth Century to the French Revolution, with an Annotated Edition of the 1752 Catalogue* (Turnhout: 2014) 1–15.

17 I use the adjective 'Trappist' for 'related to La Trappe'. The word is a common, but incorrect, term for Abstinents: the strict branch of the Cistercian Order. In fact the reform at La Trappe augmented the already existing Abstinent programme.

18 For Rancé's biography, see Krailsheimer A.J., *Armand-Jean de Rancé: Abbot of La Trappe* (Oxford: 1974); revised translation: *Armand-Jean de Rancé, abbé de la Trappe 1626–1700* (Paris: 2000). References are to the English original.

19 The 'commenda' flourished in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century France. The fifth Lateran council (1514) and the council of Trent made attempts to abolish the institution, but according to Loupès, 84 per cent of the seventeenth-century French monasteries were under commendatory rule; Loupès P., "Commende", in Bély L. (ed.), *Dictionnaire de l'Ancien Régime* (Paris: 1996) 290–291.

20 Krailsheimer, *Armand-Jean de Rancé* 7; see also the chapter on Rancé's conversion in Bell D.N., *Understanding Rancé: The Spirituality of the Abbot of La Trappe in Context* (Kalamazoo, MI: 2005) 169–196.

had it that he was to succeed his uncle, Victor Bouthillier, as archbishop of Tours. Then Mme de Montbazon died. This, Gaston's death in 1660, and other events led to a long and gradual conversion, which culminated with Rancé's novitiate at the strict Cistercian abbey of Perseigne and his installation as regular abbot in one of his five monasteries, La Trappe, in 1663.<sup>21</sup>

Rancé turned La Trappe into an epitome of strict asceticism and penitential renunciation. His programme centred on silence, penitence, obedience, and exact adherence to the Rule of Benedict, and he enjoined his monks to surrender themselves to God as perfect *holocaustes* in self-annihilating love and purity of heart. All these components are subsumed in Rancé's notion of *solitude*, which reviews the principal Old Testament connotations of the desert—death, covenant, refuge, purgation, and consecration<sup>22</sup>—and serves as a catalyst for his distinction of true from false monasticism.<sup>23</sup> He opens his chapter on *retraite*, and the second volume of his 1,000-page monastic manifesto *De la sainteté et des devoirs de la vie monastique* (1683), with a statement that

le Desert a toujours esté le Ciel des veritables Solitaires, c'est-là que toutes les graces qui leur viennent de la part de Dieu se rassemblent, et que JESUS-CHRIST prend plaisir de se donner à eux. C'est dans la solitude, que ceux qui ont gardé l'innonce du Baptesme, reçoivent le fruit et la recompense de leur fidelité.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup> For Rancé's conversion, see Marxer F., "La conversion de Rancé", in Rouche M., *Clovis—histoire et mémoire: Le baptême de Clovis, son écho à travers l'histoire*, 2 vols. (Paris: 1997), vol. 1, 523–547. Gradual conversion was the preferred type at the time; Quantin J.-L., *Le rigorisme chrétien* (Paris: 2001) 26.

<sup>22</sup> Identified in G.H. Williams's classic *Wilderness and Paradise in Christian Thought: The Biblical Experience of the Desert in the History of Christianity* (New York, NY: 1962) 11–19. For a literary study of Trappist *solitude*, see Naudin, *L'expérience* 80–93; see also Van der Schueren, *Les sociétés* 339–370 whose portrait of Rancé, however, is somewhat tinged by contemporary and scholarly clichés.

<sup>23</sup> Rancé employs *solitaire* as a term for hermits as well as cenobitic monks; see *De la sainteté et des devoirs de la vie monastique*, 2 vols. (Paris, François Muguet: 1683) IV, vol. 1, 20; he distinguishes *moines* and *solitaires* (e.g. *Eclaircissements de quelques difficultez que l'on a formées sur les livre de sainteté et des devoirs de la vie monastique* (Paris, François Muguet: 1685) 266), but, to my knowledge, does not explain the difference. It seems, however, that he deploys *moine* and *religieux* in a general sense, whereas *solitaire* describes a monk who strives to follow the desert fathers' pure example.

<sup>24</sup> Rancé, *De la sainteté* XVI.1, vol. 2, 4.

the wilderness has always been Heaven for real monks; that is where all their divinely bestowed grace accumulates and where Jesus Christ delights in offering himself to them. In solitude those who have preserved the innocence of Baptism receive the fruit and reward of their fidelity.

In his understanding of *solitude* Rancé was heir to two traditions. On the one hand, he sought to revive the monastic ethos of the desert.<sup>25</sup> John Climacus (ca. 579–649) was his preferred authority next to the *Regula S. Benedicti* and Bernard of Clairvaux, and he had two chapels constructed at La Trappe for John Climacus and Mary of Egypt.<sup>26</sup> His restoration of the materially and spiritually derelict abbey of La Trappe was described so that it accorded with the Cistercian predilection for the wilderness.<sup>27</sup> According to this tradition, the desert is at once an ascetic battlefield where the monk combats the Devil and his own flesh, and the epitome of separation from terrestrial sin and proximity

<sup>25</sup> The early monastic estrangement from civilisation has been explored in a series of classics such as Campenhausen H.F. von, "Die Asketische Heimatlosigkeit im altkirchlichen und frühmittelalterlichen Mönchtum", in idem, *Tradition und Leben: Kräfte der Kirchengeschichte* (Tübingen: 1960) 290–317; Leclercq J., "Mönchtum und Peregrinatio im Frühmittelalter", *Römische Quartalschrift* 55 (1960) 212–255 and "Monachisme et pérégrination du IX<sup>e</sup> au XII<sup>e</sup> siècle", *Studia Monastica* 3 (1961) 33–52; Ladner G., "Homo Viator: Medieval Ideas on Alienation and Order", *Speculum* 42 (1967) 233–259; McGinn B., "Withdrawal and Return: Reflections on Monastic Retreat from the World", *Spiritus* 6 (2006) 149–157; but see also Endsjø D.Ø., *Primordial Landscapes, Incorruptible Bodies, Desert Asceticism and the Christian Appropriation of Greek Ideas on Geography, Bodies, and Immortality* (New York, NY et al.: 2008), especially 17–75; and, for a thoughtful study of the wilderness as a cultural construct in early Christian asceticism, Endsjø, "The truth is out there: Primordial Lore and Ignorance in the Wilderness of Athanasius", in Feldt L. (ed.), *Wilderness in Mythology and Religion* (Berlin: 2012) 113–129. On the role of the desert in early monasticism, see further the classic: Chitty D.J., *The Desert a City: An Introduction to the Study of Egyptian and Palestinian Monasticism under the Christian Empire* (Oxford: 1966) 1–45. In the monastic tradition, any form of uncultivated nature, including forests, swamps, and seas, can serve as a wilderness; see also Bruun M.B., *Parables: Bernard of Clairvaux's Mapping of Spiritual Topography* (Leiden – Boston, MA: 2007) 70–80.

<sup>26</sup> For the latter, see Bruun – Havsteen – Mejrup – Nagelsmit – Nørgaard, "Withdrawal and Engagement" 254–276.

<sup>27</sup> For the Cistercian topos of the wilderness, see Bruun M.B., "The Wilderness as a lieu de mémoire: Literary Deserts in Cîteaux and La Trappe", in Bruun M.B. – Glaser S. (eds.), *Negotiating Heritage: Memories of the Middle Ages* (Turnhout: 2008) 21–42 and Bruun M.B. – Jamroziak E., "Introduction: Withdrawal and Engagement", in Bruun M.B. (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Cistercian Order* (Cambridge: 2012) 1–10.

with God. On the other hand, the abbot was a man of his time; his Trappist regime was in tune with contemporary religious *leitmotifs*, and he viewed *solitude* as a place fit for lachrymose penitence and untrammelled meditation of death.

Rancé's peers regarded La Trappe as a nest of superhuman ascetics who survived on a brutally coarse and scarce diet. They shuddered in awe-struck fascination at the thought of it<sup>28</sup>—if they did not mutter scathing words about Rancé's bigotry and disappointed worldly ambition.<sup>29</sup> The abbey attracted monks from other orders, priests, and former soldiers,<sup>30</sup> and it was something of a “last resort”. When the marquis de Cessac won 500,000 écus gambling with false cards and the king expelled him from Paris, Sévigné commented that many people advised him to turn to La Trappe.<sup>31</sup> Along similar lines, the young playwright Antoine Houdar de la Motte fled to La Trappe after the failure of his play *Les Originaux* (1693). Apparently the abbot allowed him to stay for two months, and then sent him away.<sup>32</sup>

### Guests at La Trappe: Secular Withdrawal and Monastic Engagement

Visitors flocked to La Trappe.<sup>33</sup> Both clergy and lay people sought its penitential atmosphere, and the abbey had a prominent position in the contemporary

28 See, e.g., Mme de Sévigné's letters to Mme de Grignan of 15 April 1671 and 29 November 1679; *Lettres*, vol. 1, 260; vol. 2, 518.

29 See above all Daniel de Larroque, *Les Véritables motifs de la Conversion de l'Abbé de la Trappe [...] Ou Les entretiens de Timocrate et de Philandre Sur un livre qui a pour titre Les S. Devoirs de la Vie Monastique* (Cologne, Pierre Marteau: 1685) and the Maurist Denis de Sainte-Marthe's *Lettres à M. l'abbé de la Trappe, ou l'on examine sa reponse au Traité des Etudes monastiques et quelques endroits de son commentaire sur la règle de Saint Benoist* (Amsterdam, Henry Desbordes: 1692).

30 See, e.g., the biographies of Trappists which appeared in collections from 1677 onwards; the most illustrious conversions were broadcast in separate volumes, the most famous being *Instruction sur la mort de Dom Muce, Religieux de l'abbaye de la Trappe* (Paris, François Muguet: 1690) and *Relation de la vie et de la mort de frere Palemon religieux de l'abbaye de la Trappe, Nommé dans le monde le comte de Santena* (Paris, Elie Josset: 1695).

31 Letter from Mme de Sévigné to Mme de Grignan dated 18 March 1671; *Lettres*, vol. 1, 227.

32 Dupont P., *Houdar de La Motte* (Paris: 1898) 3.

33 According to one guest, more than 4,000 people visited each year; Anon., “Relation d'un voyage fait à la Trappe”, in *Relation contenant la description de l'abbaye de la Trappe* (Paris, Florentin Delaulne: 1703) 97–153, at 150. One of Rancé's biographers counted a titanic 6,000; Marsollier Jacques, *La vie de Dom Armand-Jean le Bouthillier de Rancé: Abbé régulier et réformateur du Monastère de la Trappe, de l'Étroite Observance de Cîteaux* (Paris, Jean

penchant for retreats. Also in its exchange with extra-mural society, however, were Rancé and La Trappe heirs to a long-lived monastic tradition. In fact the archetypical solitude, Anthony's final home, is described as a locus of communication as much as a locus of estrangement from human intercourse. Anthony's (ca. 250–356) gradual and bedevilled separation from civilisation is mapped in the first part of Athanasius's (295–373) *Vita Antonii*: from an abode close to his village, via a more distant graveyard to a wilderness mountain where he retired to a grotto and closed up the entrance. After almost twenty years in the grotto, Anthony emerged from his sanctum allegedly with a completely pure soul, having been initiated into the divine mysteries. In this state the desert dweller preached that no one should desire anything in this world but the love of Christ, and he persuaded many to embrace a solitary life, to such effect that the desert became a city of monks enrolled in the heavenly city.<sup>34</sup> Athanasius's portrait of Anthony has roots in a tradition which harks back to biblical prophets from Elijah to John the Baptist, and in which the desert is the ultimate place of epiphany and diabolic temptation,<sup>35</sup> but also a place of instruction.<sup>36</sup> This composite motif was elaborated in, e.g., Cassian's *Collationes* which emphasise the saintly protagonists' physical remoteness alongside their hospitality and readiness to talk with their visitors. Thus the idea of the desert imbibed from the monastic tradition merges topographical isolation, hospitality, and instruction.<sup>37</sup>

The interaction between world and cloister looms large among Rancé's Cistercian forebears. No matter how absolute, Cistercian withdrawal is ever trailed by engagement, and recent scholarship has increasingly explored the

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de Nully: 1703), vol. 2, 22. There is no doubt that these numbers are hyperbolic, but it is safe to say that a substantial number of people visited La Trappe each year.

34 Athanasius, *Vita Antonii*; *Athanase d'Alexandrie: Vie d'Antoine*, ed. and trans. G.J.M. Bartelink, *Sources chrétiennes* 400 (Paris: 1994) 174. Athanasius describes Anthony as a simple ascetic, but this portrait must be supplemented by his teachings transmitted in *Apophthegmata Patrum* and, if accepted as authentic, his letters; see Rubenson S., *The Letters of St. Antony: Monasticism and the Making of a Saint* (Minneapolis, MN: 1995); see also McGinn B., "Withdrawal and Return: Reflections on Monastic Retreat from the World", *Spiritus* 6 (2006) 149–157, at 154–158 and Endsjø, "The truth is out there".

35 For this tradition, see Williams, *Wilderness and Paradise in Christian Thought*.

36 Retaining the New Testament motif of Christ preaching outside cities, with the Sermon on the Mount (*Matthew* 5) as the passage *par excellence*.

37 Descriptions of meetings between visitors and monks and hermits are also prevalent in, e.g., the lives of the desert fathers and in Egeria's report of her journey to the Holy Land (ca. 381–384) with its accounts of visits to biblical sites and the holy men who dwell there. The *cartes de visite* written about La Trappe belong to this tradition.

multifarious ways in which medieval Cistercians interacted with society at large, educating dignitaries for ecclesiastical office, receiving guests, chanting memorial masses, and offering sites for lay burials.<sup>38</sup> As Jamroziak demonstrates, late medieval Cistercian abbots were more and more engaged in wider society as they cultivated the interests of their abbeys at royal courts and parliamentary assemblies and assumed a quasi-episcopal role which involved coats of arms and abbatial residences outside the core monastic precinct.<sup>39</sup> Arguably the tension between withdrawal from the world and engagement with the world was even more acute for the seventeenth-century Cistercians than for their medieval ancestors. On the one hand, the system of commendatory abbots burgeoned, as demonstrated by Rancé's biography; monastic benefices were gleaned by secular clerics, and Cistercian abbots tended to live outside their monasteries.<sup>40</sup> On the other hand, men of state showed a

38 Martha Newman broke new ground when she showed the permeability of the boundaries of medieval Cistercian culture and demonstrated how the dissemination of texts, travelling monks, and Cistercians in ecclesiastical offices led to a significant Cistercian influence on medieval society; Newman M., *The Boundaries of Charity: Cistercian Culture and Ecclesiastical Reform* (Stanford, CA: 1996). Several recent studies have developed this dimension with a focus on hospitality, or lay burial in the Cistercian precinct; see, e.g., Kerr J., "Cistercian Hospitality in the Later Middle Ages", in Burton J. – Stöber K. (eds.), *Monasteries and Society in the British Isles in the Later Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: 2008) 25–39; Jamroziak E., "Cistercian Abbots in Late Medieval Central Europe: Between the Cloister and the World", in Heale M. (ed.), *The Prelate in England and Europe 1300–1560* (York: 2014) 240–257; Jamroziak, "Spaces of Lay-Religious Interaction in Cistercian Houses of Northern Europe", *Parergon* 27, 2 (2010) 37–58; Jamroziak, *The Cistercian Order in Medieval Europe* (London – New York, NY: 2013) 92–123. Indeed the dynamic between withdrawal and engagement and the related tension between *vita contemplativa* and *vita activa* in the shape of a dichotomy between the Christian's obligation to his neighbour and his desire for meditative absorption is a monastic *locus classicus*, seminally portrayed in Gregory the Great's (d. 604) lamentation that papal duties drew him away from monastic concentration; for references, see Müller B., "Gregory the Great and Monasticism", in Bronwen N. – Dal Santo M. (eds.), *Companion to Gregory the Great* (Leiden: 2013) 83–108, at 92–93. A seminal Cistercian parallel is Bernard of Clairvaux's sermon 26 on the Song, where the tension is personified in Bernard's deceased brother Gerard, the cellarer of Clairvaux, who tended to the daily chores in order that his brother might engage in untrammelled meditation; See Pranger M.B., *Bernard of Clairvaux and the Shape of Monastic Thought: Broken Dreams* (Leiden: 1994) 163–180 and Engh L.C., *Gendered Identities in Bernard of Clairvaux's "Sermons on the Song of Songs": Performing the Bride* (Turnhout: 2014) 365–367.

39 Jamroziak, "Cistercian Abbots" 240–257.

40 Already in 1342 seven Cistercian abbots, including the abbot of Cîteaux, were residing at the order's college in Paris; King P., *The Finances of the Cistercian Order in the Fourteenth Century* (Kalamazoo, MI: 1985) 184–185.

marked interest in monasteries.<sup>41</sup> Finally abbeys played a prominent role in the spiritual life of devout aristocrats and clergy bent on retreat who flocked to religious houses in numbers hitherto unseen.<sup>42</sup>

Some of La Trappe's visitors penned enthusiastic accounts. This enhanced the celebrity of the abbey and its superior, and afforded those who could not visit in person an armchair tour of the site. The most important *carte de visite* was written by Louis XIV's historiographer, and founding member of the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-lettres, André Félibien des Avaux Sieur de Javerçy (1619–1695).<sup>43</sup> Félibien visited La Trappe in 1670<sup>44</sup> and conveyed his impressions in the *Description de L'Abbaye de La Trappe* (1671),<sup>45</sup> addressed to the duchesse de Liancourt, Jeanne de Schomberg (1600–1674), whom Rancé probably knew when he was still in the world.<sup>46</sup> The text went through numerous

<sup>41</sup> Between 1622 and 1628 Cardinal La Rochefoucauld, President of the Royal Council, visited Benedictine and Cistercian houses and imposed reform. His successor, Richelieu, was not only Louis XIII's chief minister, but also abbot of Cluny and, from 1635, master of the Cistercian order and he worked for the congregation of all Benedictine monasteries under Cluny.

<sup>42</sup> Whereas medieval Cistercian abbeys were often sought for shelter and provided lodging for travellers in deserted areas (Kerr, "Cistercian Hospitality" 38), La Trappe and its peers tended to be endpoints or stations in their own right. See, however, also the description of medieval Cistercian houses as pilgrimage sites in Kerr, "Cistercian Hospitality" 31.

<sup>43</sup> Félibien's younger brother, Pierre, was with Rancé when he professed monastic vows. According to Thuillier, the abbot sent all his works to André Félibien for linguistic approval; Thuillier J., "Pour André Félibien", *XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle* 35, 1 (1983) 67–95, at 74, but this may well be hagiographic legend. See also Germer S., *Kunst—Macht—Diskurs: Die intellektuelle Karriere des André Félibien* (Munich: 1997) which, however, does not treat Félibien's relation to Rancé.

<sup>44</sup> See Waddell C., "The Cistercian Dimension of the Reform of La Trappe", in Elder E.R. (ed.), *Cistercians in the Late Middle Ages* (Kalamazoo, MI: 1981) 102–161, at 129; Thuillier, "Pour André Félibien" 91–94.

<sup>45</sup> For Félibien's description, see Krailsheimer, *Armand-Jean de Rancé* 86; Bell, *Understanding Rancé* 312–313.

<sup>46</sup> In the 1650s, they both frequented the salon at the Hôtel de Nevers, which had connections to Port-Royal; Rapin René, *Mémoires du P. René Rapin de la compagnie de Jésus sur l'église, la ville et le jansénisme*, ed. L. Aubineau, 3 vols. (Paris: 1865), vol. 1, 404; Mayer D., "Madame du Plessis-Guénégaud, née Elisabeth de Choiseul (1610–1677)", *XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle* 155 (1987) 173–186; 156 (1987) 313–327; Mesnard J., "Guénégaud, Elisabeth de Choiseul, épouse d'Henri de Guénégaud, dite Mme Du Plessis-", in Lesaulnier J. – McKenna A. (eds.), *Dictionnaire de Port-Royal* (Paris: 2004) 488–489; see also Lesaulnier J., "Les Liancourt, leur hôtel et leur hôtes (1613–1674)", in Lafond J. – Mesnard J. (eds.), *Images de La Rochefoucauld* (Paris: 1984) 167–200.

editions and was translated into English.<sup>47</sup> It appeared in handy duodecimo volumes, and some editions had a folded plan of the monastic precinct glued between the frontispiece and the first page.<sup>48</sup> As the inevitable consequence of its appeal, each year the Trappist monks received hundreds of guests whose presence threatened their *solitude*. The retreats that spelled *solitude* to the guests spelled *monde* to the monks; and yet the *solitaires* were not at liberty to reject visitors, because of the monastic obligation to hospitality. With its biblical underpinning, hospitality was not simply an act of charity, but also a test of the monks' love of God.<sup>49</sup> As Van der Schueren observes, monastic retreats did not inverse the daily religious habitus, but offered a continuity of it with 'l'attention [...] féthichiste au détail'.<sup>50</sup> True as this may be, we must bear in mind the exchange of, as it were, soteriological capital between guests and monks. In the constitutions Rancé sought at once to regulate the guests' peevish presence and secure that they were received with the charity owed to a Christological substitute.<sup>51</sup> The accounts, in turn, give detailed reports about the entry into La Trappe with its transition from the world to the cloister, through courts and gates, into the hall of reception where visitors were taught by tablets on the wall that the monks are not to be disturbed,<sup>52</sup> and onwards to the parlour where a monk greeted them by reading aloud a section of the *Imitatio Christi* so as to attune their spirit.<sup>53</sup>

During a renovation in the early 1680s the Trappist precinct was altered to accommodate the guests. In his visitation report, the Cistercian official

<sup>47</sup> The *Journal de Sçavans* informs its readers that Colbert did not put down Félibien's report from La Trappe until he had read it cover to cover; Thuillier, "Pour André Félibien" 74.

<sup>48</sup> *Description de l'abbaye de La Trappe* (Paris, Frederic Léonard: 1671), BnF Arsenal. The 1677 copy at the Arsenal has instead a pocket on the inside of the cover for the plan.

<sup>49</sup> This obligation is based on Jesus's word in *Matthew* 25:35 (New Revised Standard Version): 'for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me'. It is underlined in the *Regula S. Benedicti*, chapter 55 and the medieval Cistercian manual *Ecclesiastica officia*, chapters 87 and 120.

<sup>50</sup> Van der Schueren, *Les sociétés* 21.

<sup>51</sup> Visits are treated in increasing detail in the Trappist regulations. The *Constitutions* (1671) mention guests only scarcely and in passing; for example, silence is to be kept in the entire abbey during Mass unless guests suddenly appear; *Constitutions* 7. The *Regemens généraux* of 1690 have both an appended "Regemens pour les hostes" (239–247) and an "Avertissemens pour les Religieux qui ont charge de recevoir les hostes" (248–251). In *Les regemens de l'Abbaye de Nostre-Dame de La Trappe en forme de constitutions* (1698) the "Reglement pour les Hostes" (71–78) has been promoted to a prominent place before the regulations for "les lieux reguliers".

<sup>52</sup> Félibien, *Description* 29–31.

<sup>53</sup> Anon., "Relation d'un voyage fait à la Trappe" 99–100; Félibien, *Description* 37.

Dominique Georges admires the spatial lay-out and finds it so well-organised that no matter how many visitors came to La Trappe, their presence disturbed neither the monks' silence, nor their repose.<sup>54</sup> The guests were lodged in hermitages in the adjacent woods, in an apartment built across the monastic wall, or in the central building next to the lay brothers' quarters.<sup>55</sup> An unspecified group of 'externes' were housed in an apartment overlooking the outer court, to be allowed inside only for the Office,<sup>56</sup> and Louis XIV's cousin, Élisabeth d'Orléans (1646–1696), who stopped by each spring and each autumn, stayed in a lodge with its own garden in the abbey's outer court.<sup>57</sup>

Visitors to La Trappe sought *solitude* at its purest, and contemporary peers as well as modern scholars regard Rancé as an unyielding propagator of monastic isolation.<sup>58</sup> However, a closer look at the abbot's *œuvre* shows that his notion of *solitude* was both complex and pliable. He meted out to different people the shape and degree of withdrawal from the world which he found compatible with their physical and spiritual capacity. He prescribed one form of world-forsaking in his regulations for the teaching sisters of the girls' school at the neighbouring town of Mortagne,<sup>59</sup> another for the nuns at Les Clairets, whose visitor he was,<sup>60</sup> and yet a broad array of other forms of withdrawal in his vast correspondence with men and women, religious and lay. The Trappists were moulded so as to be an ascetic elite. Rancé assessed each postulant

54 'Il y a une chose bien digne d'estre remarquée, que les lieux sont si bien disposez, qu'en quelque nombre que soient les hôtes, leur multitude n'interrompt ni le silence ni le repos des Religieux'. Georges Dominique, "Procés verbal", in Maupeou Pierre de, *La vie du très-reverend père dom Armand Jean Le Bouthillier de Rancé*, 2 vols. (Paris, L. d'Houry: 1602 [i.e. 1702]), vol. 2, 268.

55 See Pierre de Rochefort's plan in Fr. Pacôme, *Description du plan en relief de l'Abbaye de la Trappe présentée au Roy par le Frere Pacôme* (Paris, Jacques Collombat: 1708); Bell, *Understanding Rancé* 327–328.

56 Félibien, *Description* 39.

57 Georges, "Procés verbal", in Maupeou, *Vie*, vol. 2, 274; see Bruun M.B. – Nørgaard L. – Nagelsmit E. – Havsteen S.R. – Mejrup K., "Withdrawn amidst the World: Rancé's *Conduite chrétienne* for Mme de Guise (1697)", *Early Modern French Studies* 39, 1 (2017) 57–74; Bruun – Havsteen – Mejrup – Nagelsmit – Nørgaard, "Withdrawal and Engagement" 254–276.

58 Suffice it to mention Chédozeau's avowal that for Rancé salvation is impossible for those who remain in the world; Chédozeau B., "Les Bénédictins Mauristes, Port-Royal et l'Abbaye de Rancé", in Seréville H. de (ed.), *Un homme et son Temps: L'Abbé de Rancé* (Bégrolles-en-Mauges: 2004) 215–223, at 218.

59 See his *Reglemens pour les filles de la Doctrine Chretienne de la ville de Mortagne [...] approuvez Par M. Savary Evêque de Sézé 1 May 1697* (Paris, F. et P. Delaulne: 1698).

60 See his *Carte de visite faite à l'abbaye de N. Dame des Clairets par le reverend pere abbe de la Trappe* (Paris: François Muguet, 1690).

attentively and turned down a great number who were not cut out for his *solitude*.<sup>61</sup> Those who stayed came to lead a life of Rule-abiding simplicity and partook of a *solitude*, the connotations of which were neither simple nor fixed.

### The Abbey in the World: Hidden yet Displayed

To Rancé and his peers, in order to secure soteriological efficacy, monastic *solitude* must be at once hidden from the world and displayed to the world. La Trappe is this doubleness incarnate. The abbey is generally portrayed as inaccessible and secreted; Félibien recalls that the surrounding woods and hills seemed to want to hide it from the rest of the world,<sup>62</sup> and guests report that they had to hire a local guide in order to find it.<sup>63</sup> At the same time La Trappe is highly visible and present in contemporary communication, and spoken of as a devotional *spectacle*.<sup>64</sup> Indeed, one commentator claims that after Rancé's reform, the abbey is admired by the entire Christian world.<sup>65</sup> This edifying exposure is underlined by Félibien, who reassures Mme de Liancourt that if it can sometimes be hard to believe the history of the ancient *solitaires* because of the temporal distance and the seductive eloquence in the writers who portray their austerities, everything that characterises the ancient *solitaires* is visible to everybody, here and now in France.<sup>66</sup> La Trappe shines in the world as the epitome of an isolation on a par with that of the desert fathers.

Not only the abbey, but also the monks hover between secrecy and display. The ambition to exhibit in public the intimacy of divinely prompted retreat is

61 His correspondence abounds in discouraging letters to people who desired to enter or to friends who had recommended candidates who, as it turned out, were not fit for Trappist life; see, e.g., Rancé's letters to Jean Favier dated 28 October 1672 and 8 May 1673; *Correspondance* (ed. Kralsheimer), vol. 1, 491, 542; and to Henri Barillon of 14 April 1689; *ibidem*, vol. 3, 661.

62 Félibien, *Description 6*.

63 *Ibidem* 6; "Relation d'un voyage" 151; see also Bruun, "The Wilderness".

64 Saint-Simon, Louis de Rouvroy, duc de, *Mémoires*, ed. Y. Coirault, 8 vols. (Paris: 1983–1988), vol. 1, 122; see also Claude Masson's description of the Trappists' exercises and the exactness with which they are performed as 'un des plus beaux spectacles qu'on puisse voir'. "Second discours", in *Deux retraites de dix jours contenant chacune trente Méditations, et un Sermon sur les principaux devoirs de la Vie Religieuse avec deux Discours sur la Vie des Religieux de la Trape* (Lyon, Claude Bachelu: 1697) 465.

65 Arnaudin A. d', *La vie de Dom Pierre le Nain, religieux et ancien souprieur de l'Abbaye de la Trappe* (Paris, Saugrain l'aîné: 1715) 18–19.

66 Félibien, *Description* 138–139.

akin to the seventeenth-century idea of conversion as a proclamation of divine grace which must be broadcast in order to edify as many as possible, as well as to the basic monastic obligation to be a light to the world. The Trappist biographies, which were published in collections and the most striking of which appeared individually, were key vehicles for the exhibition of the devotion of Rancé's monks.<sup>67</sup> Also other hagiographies praise the edifying effects of the sight of Trappist piousness. For example, the Trappist subprior Pierre le Nain's (1640–1713) biographer depicts his protagonist in prayer with a somewhat voyeuristic approach, as he exclaims that no vision was more edifying than that of this pious figure at the feet of the cross, annihilating himself before God and pleading with zeal and fervour that he be favourable towards le Nain until his dying day.<sup>68</sup>

Rancé chimes in, averring that solitude must be seen. The monks' discipline takes place under the constant surveillance of God and the abbot (cf. *Regula S. Benedicti* 7.12–13), but also before the world's eyes. After all, withdrawal is void if it is not witnessed for 'le renoncement et l'engagement d'un Solitaire n'est autre chose qu'un témoinage public [...] qu'il est crucifié, et qu'il est mort' ('the monk's renunciation and obligation is but a public testimonial [...] that he is crucified and that he is dead').<sup>69</sup> In their capacity of public testimonial they would not want to be seen by the world as some kind of monster or chimaera, embodying an impossible fusion of ill-regulated behaviour and profession of severe penitence.<sup>70</sup> In its proper form, the image of the abbey conveyed *au*

67 See, e.g., Rancé, *Relations de la mort de quelques religieux de l'abbaye de la Trappe* (1696), but also *Instruction sur la mort de Dom Muce* (1690) and *Relation de la vie et de la mort de frere Palemon* (1695).

68 'Quel spectacle plus édifiant que d'y voir ce pieux personnage aux pieds du Crucifix, s'anéantir devant Dieu, et lui demander avec zèle et avec ardeur qu'il lui soit favorable au jour de sa mort', *La vie de Dom Pierre le Nain* 77. But the view is not always enough. Masson muses that he does not understand how heretics and bad Catholics can resist the appeal of La Trappe when everybody sees the miracles worked by God in those who withdraw there; "Second discours" 478.

69 Rancé, *De la sainteté* XII, introduction, vol. 1, 311 with a marginal reference to Cassian's *De institutis coenobiorum* 4.34. It is worth noticing that Rancé underlines the element of display in his rendering of Cassian's term *indictium* as 'témoinage public'; cf. *Inst.* 4.34.1.

70 'voudriez-vous, mes Freres, que l'on fit voir au monde, en vos personnes, une espece de monstre, ou de chimere, en alliant deux choses aussi differentes et aussi contraires, que la difformité d'une contenance mal reglée, et la profession d'une penitence severe?' Rancé, *Conference pour le III. Dimanche après les Rois*, in *Conferences ou Instructions sur les épîtres et evangiles des dimanches et principales festes de l'année, Et sur les Vêtures et Professions Religieuses*, 4 vols. (Paris, Florentin et Pierre Delaulne: 1698), vol. 1, 322–323. Rancé may or may not have had in mind Bernard's well-known complaint 'Ego quaedam chimaera mei

*monde* is an important missiological vehicle, since it prompts emulation, but the monks' exposure is also integral to their penitential obligation, and Rancé resorts to stark dichotomies in his description of the penitential corollaries of monastic exposure. The monks, he claims,

sont des troupes de criminels et de penitens publics, qui ayant manqué à la fidelité qu'ils devoient à Dieu; et l'ayant irrité par leur desobeissance, ne peuvent plus rien pretendre de sa bonté, qu'aprés avoir satisfait à sa justice par des châtimens dignes de leurs pechez. [...] On dira peut-estre qu'il y a des Ecclesiastiques pecheurs, et des Moines justes; je l'avouë. Mais comme le pecheur au moment qu'il est mis au rang des Levites, cesse d'estre regardé comme pecheur; Ainsi un juste cesse d'estre regardé comme juste, dans le moment qu'il est Moine, et il ne peut plus estre regardé que comme un pecheur: Il perd son innocence en se renfermant dans le Monastere, de mesme que JESUS-CHRIST a cessé en quelque sorte, de passer pour Saint, au moment qu'il s'est fait voir dans le monde avec l'habit, et sous la forme d'un pecheur, non seulement dans l'opinion des hommes; mais encore dans les traitemens rigoureux qu'il a receus de la main de son Pere.<sup>71</sup>

are troops of criminals and public penitents. Since they have failed to show God due faithfulness and since they have annoyed him by their disobedience, they can only claim his goodness once they have satisfied his justice by a chastisement appropriate to their sins. [...] Admittedly some might say that there are priests who are sinners and monks who are righteous. But the moment a sinner joins the Levites' ranks, he ceases to be seen as a sinner, and in the same way, someone righteous ceases to be seen as such as soon as he becomes a monk, and henceforth is regarded only as a sinner. He loses his innocence when he withdraws to the cloister, just as in some ways the moment he appeared in the world in a sinner's garb and form, Christ ceased to be viewed as a saint: not only in

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saeculi, nec clericum gero, nec laicum'—'I am the chimera of my age, neither a cleric, nor a layman' (*Epistola* 250). Rancé does know the phrase; he quotes it in his *Réponse au Traité des études monastiques* (Paris, François Muguet: 1692) 327.

<sup>71</sup> Rancé, *De la sainteté* XII.21, vol. 1, 392–393; the passage is a verbatim quotation from Rancé's *Lettre d'un abbé regulier: Sur le sujet des Humiliations, et autres Pratiques de Religion* (Paris, Jean Baptiste Coignard: 1677) 212–215. His reasoning is related to the idea that the monks are suffering vicariously for the world; *De la sainteté* XVIII.6, vol. 2, 231.

the world's eyes, but also in the rigorous treatment imposed on him by his Father.

This passage teems with expressions that underline the monk's display: 'pénitent public', 'être regardé', 's'est faire voir dans le monde', 'l'opinion des hommes'. The monk stands in the pillory, atoning for sins that he has not necessarily committed. His exposure is a means of edification for those who view it as well as a component of his penitential commitment. With this intricate interaction of penitence and edification, even a staunch champion of monastic isolation such as Rancé can demand that monks be seen, without losing sight of his ideal of withdrawal.

Monastic life exposes the monk, but it gives him cover too. Hidden in his *solitude*,<sup>72</sup> his is a fortunate state, since he avoids numerous perils on account of his separation from the world, while enjoying the abundance of blessings and graces bestowed by God on those who serve him in retreat.<sup>73</sup> In its hiddenness, monastic life is a refuge which protects its adherents from dangers on several levels. God has separated the monks from the world which is the source and seat of dissipation, and he has enclosed them in solitude, as if by a rampart, so as to make them inaccessible to anything which might draw them away from his command, from his hand, and from his presence.<sup>74</sup> Contemporary crises provoked by wars and their corollaries<sup>75</sup> may have inspired Rancé's declaration

72 Rancé, *Réponse au Traité des études* 460.

73 Rancé, *De la sainteté* XVI.22, vol. 2, 139; see also his *Conduite chrétienne adressée à son Altesse Royalle Madame de Guise* (Paris, Florentin et Pierre Delaulne: 1697) 2 and *Maxime* 558, in *Maximes chrétiennes et morales, par le R.P. Dom Armand Jean, ancien abbé, de la Maison-Dieu nostre-Dame de la Trappe*, 2 vols. (Paris, Florentin et Pierre Delaulne: 1698), vol. 2, 313. The hidden monks may refer to several biblical verses, e.g. *Matthew* 6.1, 'Beware of practising your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven'; *Matthew* 6.6, 'But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you'; and *John* 12.36, 'While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become children of light. After Jesus had said this, he departed and hid from them'.

74 God 'vous a separé du monde qui est la source et le siège de la dissipation. Il vous a renfermé dans la solitude, comme s'il vous avoit entouré d'un rempart pour faire que vous soyez inaccessibles à tout ce qui pourroit vous retirer de son ordre, de sa main et de sa présence'. Rancé, *De la sainteté* XI.6, vol. 1, 308.

75 For this crisis and its potential religious implications, see Lehmann H. – Trepp A.-C. (eds.), *Im Zeichen der Krise: Religiosität im Europa des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Göttingen: 1999); Lehmann H., *Das Zeitalter des Absolutismus: Gottesgnadentum und Kriegsnot* (Stuttgart: 1980) and "Saving One's Soul in an Age of Crises", *Journal of Early Modern Christianity* 1, 2 (2014) 207–217.

that in the abbey's serene haven, monks are troubled neither by burning flesh, nor by the blood of animals, or by trials, tumult, or confusion.<sup>76</sup> The abbot does mention the terror of war in suggestive detail,<sup>77</sup> and contemporary upheavals resurface in his letters.<sup>78</sup> Speaking of other forms of danger, Krailsheimer remarks that La Trappe could safely be called a haven of peace, since the obligation to silence fended off the fierce theological debates which characterised the age.<sup>79</sup> However, even if both the horror of war and theological conflict loom large, to my mind there is little doubt that for Rancé, the main protection offered by the cloister is against worldly vices and attachments; that is, from the very shipwrecks of life on the tempestuous sea of passion.<sup>80</sup> He associates the casting of the abbey as a port with the discourse of exposure, and explains that exactly in its capacity as a peaceful port must the abbey be visible in order to attract people in the world who are otherwise exposed to wreckage and ruin. The motif of monks as the light of the world lends itself to lighthouse associations. Spiritual eminence and physical altitude blend as Rancé describes the monks as torches the splendid glow of which is seen from afar in this most

76 'on ne voir ni fumée de viandes, ni sang d'animaux, ni trouble, ni tumulte, ni confusion. C'est un port tranquille', Rancé, *Eclaircissements* 454; cf. his description of monastic life as a dike that holds back the torrents of worldly misery in *II. Conference pour le 1. Dimanche de l'Avent* in *Conférences ou Instructions*, vol. 1, 33. For a description of the cloister as refuge and asylum in the monastic tradition, see Leclercq J., *Otia monastica: études sur le vocabulaire de la contemplation au moyen âge*, *Studia Anselmiana* 51 (Rome: 1963) 137–139.

77 Rancé, *II. Conference pour le 1. Dimanche de l'Avent* in *Conférences ou Instructions*, vol. 1, 28–29.

78 See Rancé's letter to Pomponne of 3 December 1679; *Correspondance* (ed. Krailsheimer), vol. 2, 323.

79 Krailsheimer A.-J., "Armand-Jean de Rancé: Convert and Reformer", *Cistercian Studies* 18, 1 (1983) 24–41, at 39.

80 See, e.g., Rancé's letter to his niece Mlle de Vernassal concerning her plans to become a nun, 'Ainsi, ma chère nièce, quitter le monde c'est se tirer du milieu d'une tempête dans laquelle il est presque impossible d'éviter le naufrage'—'Thus, my dear niece, leaving the world is to withdraw from the centre of a tempest in which it is almost impossible to avoid shipwreck'. Letter of 30 September 1680; *Correspondance* (ed. Krailsheimer), vol. 2, 429; see also his letter to Pomponne of October 1674; *Correspondance* (ed. Krailsheimer), vol. 1, 648 where he describes the diplomat Pomponne as exposed to the tempests of the world and his father, Arnauld d'Andilly, as covered. For the history of the *topos* of the abbey as a port, see Waldhoff S., "Das Kloster als Hafen: Meditationen über eine Metapher monastischer *conversio*", *Studien und Mitteilungen zur Geschichte des Benediktinerordens und seiner Zweige* 123 (2012) 7–114. The maritime vocabulary is but one register employed by Rancé to show the chaotic and threatening nature of the world; *orage* and *revolution*, among others, are deployed to this end as well; Papasogli B., "Solitude et silence de la mémoire chez l'abbé de Rancé", *Chroniques de Port-Royal* 51 (2002) 245–263, at 248–252.

elevated site; they draw everybody towards love of this sacred repose that the monks enjoy, and which protects from shipwrecks and darkness those who contemplate the brothers and their saintly abode.<sup>81</sup> 'Allez donc les voir', Rancé exhorts, 'étudiez leur sagesse, cherchez leur conversation, jetez-vous à leurs pieds pour les embrasser' ('Go and see them, study their wisdom, seek their conversation, throw yourself at their feet to kiss them').<sup>82</sup> Such statements throw light on the legions of visitors who came to La Trappe. Their presence was a challenge, but they embodied the abbey's fulfilment of its function as a port that offered people of the world protection from carnal shipwrecks.

In their withdrawal from the world the monks are lodestars, and they cannot afford to let their hiddenness eclipse their visibility. The paradox is evident, and the abbot is in no hurry to dissolve it; La Trappe can work as an icon of isolation which incites emulation only if it is viewed and visited.

### ***Solitude: Flexible, Exclusive, and Ubiquitous***

*Solitude* is a place, a practice, and a temper. *Solitude* is the remote location of the abbey and as such associated with the wilderness of the primeval desert fathers. *Solitude*, however, is also the core of monastic asceticism, and when monks obey monastic regulations, not only is the cloister in *solitude*, *solitude* is also in the cloister as an ascetic exercise alongside vigils, manual labour, silence, and contemplative reading.<sup>83</sup> In this capacity, *solitude* denotes the ongoing estrangement from worldly mores and practices. Finally, *solitude* is in

81 'les Solitaires qui s'y reposent, sont comme autant de flambeaux dont la splendeur se fait découvrir de loin dans un lieu fort élevé, qui attirent tout le monde à l'amour de ce sacré repos dont ils joüissent, et qui garantissent du naufrage et des tenebres tous ceux qui jettent les yeux sur eux, et qui considerent leur sainte demeure'. Rancé, *Eclaircissement* 454–455.

82 Ibidem 455.

83 Rancé, *La règle de Saint Benoist nouvellement traduite, et expliquée selon son véritable esprit. Par l'Auteur des Devoirs de la Vie Monastique*, 2 vols. (Paris, François Muguet: 1689), vol. 1, 71; see also ibidem, vol. 1, 117; *De la sainteté XII.4*, vol. 1, 331 and *Eclaircissement* 454: 'Les Monastères [...], sont de véritables maisons de deuil, où l'on ne voit que cendre, que cilice, et que solitude; où l'on ne trouve jamais ni le ris, ni la vaine joie, ni l'embarras des affaires'—'Monasteries [...] are veritable houses of mourning where one sees nothing but ashes, sackcloth and solitude; never laughter, never vainglory, never the awkwardness of worldly business'. See also Rancé's lamentation of the slackened monastic virtue which means that 'on a rendu la solitude moins exacte, et par consequent la vie moins intérieure; l'on a eu plus de commerce avec les hommes, et moins avec Dieu'—'we have

nucleus the disposition required of the monks: a perfect orientation towards God. Often Rancé evokes the three dimensions interchangeably or merges them—as in this rare lyrical passage from the *Eclaircissement*:

O bien-heureuse Solitude, dans laquelle l'homme repare dans son ame l'image de son Createur qu'il y voit effacée par le peché; dans laquelle il retourne à la pureté de son origine, dans laquelle il recouvre la vivacité et la vigueur de sa raison, en la dégageant des nuages qui l'avoient obscurcie; et où enfin la nature corrompuë, retrouve en quelque sorte son intégrité, et sa première innocence ... O Solitude! tu es la ruine des vices, et l'établissement des vertus; et tous ceux qui sont arrivez à quelque perfection, connoissent combien tu es digne de louanges! C'a été dans la solitude que Moïse a receu par deux fois le Decalogue pour le donner au Peuple de Dieu: C'a été dans la solitude que le Prophète Elie a joüi de la présence de Dieu, qu'Elisée a receu le double esprit de son Maître, et le Sauveur du monde a voulu que son Precurseur vécût dans la séparation du monde. Solitude, tu es cette échelle de Jacob qui fais monter les hommes jusques dans le Ciel, et qui fais descendre les Anges vers les hommes pour les secourir. La Solitude est une voie courte et abrégée pour le salut: C'est un état dans lequel on voit et on corrige, sans se flatter, les défauts les plus secrets et les plus cachez de son ame, et dans lequel on a toujours la liberté de s'entretenir avec Dieu, de le consulter, de l'écouter sans estre interrompu, de recevoir ses conseils, d'agir par sa conduite et par sa sagesse, d'entendre ce langage interieur avec lequel il parle aux ames, sans que les sens y ayent la moindre part.<sup>84</sup>

O happy Solitude where man restores in his soul the image of the Creator that has been effaced by sin; where he returns to the purity of his origins; where he recovers the vivacity and vigour of his reason, blowing away the clouds that have obscured it; where finally his corrupt nature retrieves in some manner its integrity and its first innocence ... O Solitude! You are the ruin of vices, and the foundation of virtues, and everybody who has reached some form of perfection, knows very well how praiseworthy you are! It was in solitude that Moses twice received the Ten Commandments given to God's people. It was in solitude that the prophet Elijah enjoyed God's presence; where Elisha received his master's double spirit; and

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made solitude less exact and thus life less interior; we have had more commerce with human beings and less with God; *De la sainteté* xxiii.7, vol. 2, 538.

84 Rancé, *Eclaircissement* 406–407.

where the Saviour of the world wished his precursor to live in separation from the world. Solitude, you are Jacob's ladder, enabling human beings to ascend all the way to Heaven, and angels to descend to humankind in order to help them. Solitude is a shortcut to salvation: it is a state where we see and correct, without flattery, the most secret and hidden flaws in our soul; where we are always at liberty to converse with God, to consult him and listen to him without interruption and to receive his counsels, act according to his direction and wisdom, listen to the interior language in which he speaks to souls without leaving the slightest role to the senses.

This passage shows the paradigmatic pliability of the *topos*. *Solitude* is a biblical location, a shortcut, a ladder, a state, and a practice. It is the locus of the most intimate meetings with God and the fiercest elimination of sin. Exactly because *solitude* is a form of nothingness, it can be all of this.

*La solitude* is the opposite of *le monde*. According to Rancé, the proper Christian is *dégagé* and *détaché*,<sup>85</sup> the monk has *renoncé*,<sup>86</sup> in order to see Christ in a *desoccupation entière de toutes les choses du monde*.<sup>87</sup> Negations abound. The abbot's concept of *solitude* involves a rejection—and thereby some degree of confirmation—of the *grand siècle* and its norms. The idiom *se retirer du monde* seems straightforward, but what in fact do Trappists withdraw from? For Rancé, 'Le monde' may signify contemporary French society,<sup>88</sup> the extra-mural world, or the spirit of worldliness. Monks belong inescapably within the first version of *le monde* as one of seven societal estates,<sup>89</sup> but the last two versions they must—and can—shun.<sup>90</sup> At a first glance, the abbot seems to operate with a clear-cut binary between the cloister and the world, but the situation is not black and white. While his treatises rehearse a sharp distinction of *le monde* and *la solitude* and presuppose that monks may withdraw completely from the world, his monastic homilies and letters to monks and nuns are rich in warnings that worldly vices do indeed creep into the cloister. When he exclaims that the world is full of people enslaved by their passions,

85 Rancé, *De la sainteté* I.3, vol. 1, 3.

86 Ibidem 1.2, vol. 1, 2.

87 Ibidem II.2, vol. 1, 7.

88 Rancé, *Conférence pour le jour des Rois*, in *Conferences ou Instructions*, vol. 1, 194.

89 See, e.g., Ibidem, vol. 1, 194; *Conduite chrétienne* 310.

90 For a rich survey of meanings of *le monde* and research literature on the topic, see Beugnot B. (ed.), *La notion de "monde" au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Littératures classiques 22 (Paris: 1994), especially Beugnot's introduction, "Les lieux du monde" 7–23.

monks are not exempt.<sup>91</sup> Each segment of society is plagued by vicious hazards integral to its respective profession, and for monks the principal vice is want of segregation. ‘Ce n'est point assez d'être engagé dans une profession sainte pour être saint’, Rancé reminds his readers, ‘il ne suffit pas d'être différent par les exercices et par les occupations, des personnes du monde pour les surpasser en piété; car il arrive souvent que l'on porte et que l'on conserve leurs sentimens et leurs maximes dans la retraite’ (‘Engaging in a saintly profession is not enough to be saintly. Differentiating ourselves from people of the world by exercises and occupation is not sufficient to surpass them in piousness for it happens all too often that we carry with us and preserve their sentiments and mores in our retreat’).<sup>92</sup> Even though God has removed the monks from the world and brought them to a state that enables them to fend off demonic attacks, the brothers should not consider themselves safe, and Rancé warns that the disorders which lurk in the cloister are no less evil than those which affect people in the world. Monks besieged by such disorders are no longer held back by fear of God, the yoke of which they have long since cast off, and ‘l'honnêteté, qui arreste quelquefois les gens du monde, ne peut rien sur eux’ (‘the uprightness which sometimes restrains people of the world, has no sway over them’).<sup>93</sup> They become one of the restlessly vagary monks, described in the first chapter of the Rule of Benedict: *semper vagi et numquam stabiles*.<sup>94</sup>

Not only vices creep in. Also the worldly virtue of *bienséance* (decorum), celebrated by Rancé’s contemporaries and, according to the abbot, foreign to a genuine monastic life, turns up within the walls. Christians who live in the world and whom the Gospel obliges to interior poverty, sometimes justify their refined taste in furniture, habits, equipage, and general lifestyle with reference to their need to blend in with their environment, and sometimes they have a point. Things look different for the monk, however, whose profession requires a life in constant humiliation. He cannot excuse himself with reference to decorum: for in someone who is poor by duty and condition, and for whom poverty is joy and glory, the only licit form of seemliness is the manifestation of poverty in all actions and existential circumstances.<sup>95</sup> Rancé finds that all too

<sup>91</sup> Rancé, *Conférence pour le III. Dimanche après les Rois*, in *Conferences ou Instructions*, vol. 1, 319.

<sup>92</sup> Rancé, *La Régule de saint Benoist*, vol. 1, 306.

<sup>93</sup> Rancé, *Conférence pour le 1. Dimanche de l'Avent*, vol. 1, 12–13. Just like *bienséance*, the concept of *honnêteté* is a token of the cultural norm of Rancé’s age and class.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibidem*, vol. 1, 14.

<sup>95</sup> The passage reads *in extenso*: ‘Quand un Chrestien qui vit dans le monde, et qui selon les regles de l’Evangile doit estre pauvre interieurement, ne garde pas la pauvreté dans ses

often *bienséance* is called upon in the cloister to justify worldly concerns and deviations from the monastic ethos, and he thunders against abbots who are transported in pompous carriages with reference to superiors' need to adapt to the demands of *bienséance*.<sup>96</sup> The only valid form of *bienséance* is that of the desert fathers, who are like angels in a human body, and whose pure life prepares them to appear at their spiritual wedding 'avec une bien-séance qui soit digne de Dieu' ('with a form of decorum worthy of God').<sup>97</sup>

Even for a monastic hardliner such as Rancé, *solitude* is not a monastic privilege. Exactly because *solitude* is not only a locus, but also a practice and a disposition, it exists beyond the monastic walls. Rancé's description of *solitude* in relation to people in the world shows how the boundary between the cloister and the world is at once robust and flexible. On the one hand, even in their radical segregation, the monks are in constant danger of being overtaken by the world; on the other hand, people outside the abbey, who are constantly exposed to worldly perils, may sample the monastic potential to enter *solitude*. For example, Rancé instructs Mme de Guise to take as her example the disciples who

ne vivoient plus que pour J.C. et qui attendoient dans une impatience toute sainte, l'Esprit consolateur qu'il leur avoit promis, se séparerent du reste des hommes, et trouverent le secret de se faire une solitude dans le milieu de Jérusalem qui étoit la Ville du monde la plus peuplée.<sup>98</sup>

no longer lived for anything but Jesus Christ and who awaited with saintly impatience the consolatory spirit which he has promised them, while separating themselves from the rest of mankind and having discovered the secret of how to create for themselves solitude in the middle of Jerusalem which was the world's most densely populated city.

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meubles, dans ses habits, dans son équipage, ny dans sa conduite exterieure; il s'excuse sur sa condition, sur la bienseance, et sur la nécessité dans laquelle il est de ne se pas éloigner entierement de ceux avec lesquels il est obligé de vivre; et quelquefois il a raison: Mais pour un Moine, il ne s'çauroit rien alleguer de semblable; car sa condition, n'est comme nous l'avons dit tant de fois, que la profession et la pratique d'une vie humiliée; *Ordo noster abjectio est, humilitas est, voluntaria paupertas est* [margin: Bern. Ep. 142], De se couvrir de la bienseance, cela n'est pas possible, puisque ce qui sied et convient davantage à un homme qui est pauvre par estat et par devoir, et dont la pauvreté est le bonheur et la gloire; c'est de faire paroistre cette mesme pauvreté dans toutes les actions et les circonstances de sa vie'. Rancé, *De la sainteté* XXI.2, vol. 2, 340–341.

96 Ibidem IX.8, vol. 1, 215.

97 Rancé, *Eclaircissemens* 439.

98 Rancé, *Conduite chrétienne* 217–218.

Apparently the abbot found that the princess had indeed been able to do the same for herself, and he applauds the fact that she 'se fait une solitude de Paris dans le dessein où elle est de ne voir personne [...]'; c'est une grâce bien particulière d'être solitaire dans le milieu du monde' ('turns Paris into solitude with her decision not to see anybody [...]'; it is a quite particular grace to be a *solitaire* amidst the world').<sup>99</sup> Surprisingly, perhaps, Rancé's correspondence shows that the abbot had no desire to drive the entire world into the cloister. To some addressees he recommends withdrawal;<sup>100</sup> to others, that they remain in the world;<sup>101</sup> and still others had better drop their withdrawal if it is not sincere.<sup>102</sup>

Within the fallen world, *solitude* may be aspired to by lay and religious alike. As a temper or a disposition, *solitude* may thrive on both sides of the monastic wall, although the conditions are more fertile within it. The fact that *solitude* is not only present in the locus of *solitude* adds a significant dimension to the abbot's correspondence and what may seem to us—and did indeed seem to his detractors—the glaring collision between the abbot's claim to isolation and

99 Letter to Mme de Guise [no date] 1688; *Correspondance* (ed. Krailsheimer), vol. 3, 510–511. For Rancé's demand that Mme de Guise shows her withdrawal to the world, see Bruun – Nørgaard – Nagelsmit – Havsteen – Mejrup, "Withdrawn amidst the World".

100 He praises Mlle de Vertus's Lenten isolation, declaring his recognition that she has been as solitary as she could during Lent and that she has every reason to maintain her solitude with exactness, since the more she refuses herself to other human beings, the more she gives herself to God: 'Je vois bien, Mademoiselle, que vous avez été solitaire pendant tout ce carême autant que vous l'avez pu, et vous avez beaucoup de raison de rendre votre solitude exacte, car plus vous refuserez aux créatures, plus vous donnerez à Dieu'. Letter of 28 May 1685; *Correspondance* (ed. Krailsheimer), vol. 3, 266.

101 He believes that the Princess Palatine, Anne de Gonzague (1616–1684) should leave the world; see his letter to a 'Madame', possibly de Saint-Loup, of November 1675; *Correspondance* (ed. Krailsheimer), vol. 1, 715. To the marquise de Sablé, however, he writes that it is more important to give up worldly values than to profess religious vows; see his letter of 3 July 1677; *Correspondance* (ed. Krailsheimer), vol. 2, 139–140. He clarifies to the marquise d'Huxelles that he has not proposed that she leave everything and retreats to the desert, since a transformation of this weight would be too abrupt; letter of 2 December 1677; *Correspondance* (ed. Krailsheimer), vol. 2, 169. Finally he reminds an unidentified 'Madame N.' that if everybody were to leave husbands and wives in order to withdraw from the world, it would create disorder; he encourages her instead to abandon Court and retreat to a house in the countryside, giving up useless conversation and professing publically a vow to serve God; letter dated 26 July 1676; *Correspondance* (ed. Krailsheimer), vol. 2, 54–57.

102 See the comments on Mme de Mornay's sister in his letter to Mme de Guise of 23 August 1693; *Correspondance* (ed. Krailsheimer), vol. 4, 266–267.

his almost frantically comprehensive correspondence.<sup>103</sup> Probably Rancé did not find that he was engaging with the world in his letters because the discursive space occupied in the correspondence is not of the world, but of solitude.

## Epilogue

At a first glance the monastic wall seems solid, and Rancé seems to speak of *le monde* and *la solitude* as mutually exclusive. But a closer look at visits to La Trappe as well as Rancé's *œuvre* shows that in fact the boundaries of Trappist solitude are porous and the abbot's notion of *solitude* flexible. Letters and visitors traverse the walls; virtual solitudes are shared by people who aspire to withdrawal from the world, albeit under different conditions and with different degrees of isolation.

Late seventeenth-century Trappist life was permeated by the urge to withdraw from the world. It was modelled on the desert fathers' ethos; silence muffled conflicts as well as partiality, and the spirit of Mary of Egypt's self-effacing penitence loomed large. Guests described the abbey and its liturgical schedule as the epitome of *solitude*, removed in time and space from the rest of society. At the same time La Trappe opened its gates to hundreds of visitors, who followed the life of the monks with a blend of awe and curiosity, and partook of their *solitude* for a few days before returning to the world and conveying their impressions. Rancé's correspondence was vast even by contemporary standards. In his authoritative capacity of convert and abbot, he doled out different versions and degrees of solitude with keen pastoral discernment, maintaining the ideal while negotiating its contents. La Trappe was a paradigm of solitude in late seventeenth-century France; its example reminds us that early modern *solitude* is modulated by a broad array of communication, and that no abbey is an island.

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<sup>103</sup> For a satirical view of Rancé epistolary busyness, see, e.g., Sainte-Marthe, *Lettres à M. l'abbé de la Trappe* 54.

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# Mirrors and Memories: The Chinese Mirror Cabinet at the Hermitage near Bayreuth

*Marie Theres Stauffer*

Any contemporary account of the north-Bavarian town of Bayreuth will mention the *Spiegelscherbenkabinett* (Cabinet of Fragmented Mirrors), which is located in the *Altes Schloss* (Old Palace) of the Hermitage, an expansive property on the outskirts of the town. The interior of this cabinet seems highly unusual to contemporary viewers—and it was also quite remarkable when the room was fitted out in 1750 [Fig. 15.1].<sup>1</sup> What was seen as noteworthy, or even downright unusual, about the room's furnishing was its dominant decorative element—namely the numerous mirror pieces in a variety of formats and irregular forms mounted on the room's brown-varnished wooden paneling. These mirror fragments adorn the upper segment of the room's five walls. They are clustered thickly, alternating with a few pastel-toned chinoiserie bas-reliefs. The similarly brown-varnished wainscoting underneath, featuring stuccoed and painted flower blossoms framed vertically or horizontally, forms a kind of pedestal zone. Slender cornices crown the top of the walls.

The reflective walls encompass a room that is nearly square, extended on the east side by a small niche that originally served as an alcove. One enters the cabinet room from the north side; two windows can be found on the southern wall opposite the entrance. A flat ceiling stretches across the entire room, again adorned with painted and sculpted chinoiseries from Adam Rudolf Albini (1719–1797) [Fig. 15.2].<sup>2</sup> It is owing to these East Asian-inspired decorative elements on the walls and ceiling that the cabinet was dubbed the *Chinesisches Spiegelkabinett* (Chinese Mirror Cabinet) in the eighteenth century.

<sup>1</sup> See Krückmann P.O., "Die Eremitage: Vom Berg der Weisheit zur Insel der Glücklichen", in Krückmann P.O. (ed.), *Das Bayreuth der Markgräfin Wilhelmine*, Paradies des Rokoko 1 (Munich: 1998) 46; Bachmann E. – Seelig L., *Eremitage zu Bayreuth* (Munich: 1997) 29; Harth D.S., *Strategien der sozialen Distinktion im ausgehenden 18. Jahrhundert: Die Raumabfolge des Markgräfinnenflügels unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Spiegelkabinetts* (Stuttgart: 2014), 28.

<sup>2</sup> The sculpted elements are made of soapstone.



FIGURE 15.1 *Anon. artisans, Cabinet with mirror and chinoiseries (ca. 1750). Bayreuth, Hermitage, Old Palace, western wall.*

IMAGE © BAYERISCHE SCHLÖSSERVERWALTUNG, MUNICH; PHOTO: ACHIM BUNZ.

Neither the wall's iconography nor the images on the ceiling make any direct reference to the theme of hermitage in the sense of a secluded life of prayer. This can be said despite the fact that, when we analyse the room, we can only draw limited conclusions from its appearance today. This is because the cabinet room was restored by King Ludwig II (1845–1886), who in the nineteenth century installed a number of larger mirror pieces, for example those above the fireplace or between the windows.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, we must assume that the walls of the original 'cabinet' were uniformly filled with mirror pieces, only clustered less densely. The niche that is now entirely glassed over was also adorned with smaller mirror fragments in the same manner. And finally, most of the mirrors distributed rhythmically across the walls had a shelf—and standing on these shelves were a total of over 300 small sculptures from East Asia, as well

<sup>3</sup> See Krückmann P.O. – Erichsen J. – Grübl K., *Die Eremitage in Bayreuth* (Munich: 2011) 92–93.



FIGURE 15.2 Adam Rudolf Albini (plasterer), *Detail of the ceiling of the cabinet (ca. 1750)*.  
Sculpted Soapstone and Painting, 4.25 × 4.29 m. Bayreuth, Hermitage, Old Palace.  
IMAGE © BAYERISCHE SCHLÖSSERVERWALTUNG, MUNICH; PHOTO:  
ACHIM BUNZ.

as vases made of soapstone and other materials.<sup>4</sup> The resulting changes and losses, which also include the original furniture, pose a challenge for research.<sup>5</sup> However, considering that the appearance of the mirror cabinet had changed more quantitatively than qualitatively, in my opinion it should be possible to discuss the significance of the room in its architectural-historical, iconographic, and social contexts.

### The Taste for the Precious: Mirrors and Asian Porcelain

The Chinese Mirror Cabinet in the Old Palace was entirely in tune with the then-prevalent taste for Asian-themed art.<sup>6</sup> Likewise, it is also a manifestation of the aristocratic enthusiasm for mirrors and mirrored cabinets.<sup>7</sup> Early examples of this type of room emerged around 1650 in and around Paris. They include the cabinets in the Château de Maisons, Vaux le Vicomte, and in the Hôtel Lauzun, all of which have been largely preserved [Fig. 15.3]. The Hall of Mirrors in the Palace of Versailles—built under Louis XIV (1638–1715) between 1678 and 1686, designed by the architect Jules Hardouin-Mansart (1646–1708) and the artist Charles Le Brun (1619–1690)—proved particularly influential for the further spread of mirrored rooms [Fig. 15.4].<sup>8</sup> In the decades that followed, mirrored surfaces developed into an ever more important element of wall

4 The Asian artefacts were transported to Berlin in 1799, into the possession of the House of Brandenburg-Prussia, and there is no trace of them from this point forth. See *ibidem* 92; Bachmann – Seelig, *Eremitage zu Bayreuth* 29.

5 We can gain an idea of the furnishings using the inventory from 1751. This document reveals that the room contained chairs which bore a netting of peacock quills; the alcoves could be closed by curtains made of 'reichen persianischen Zeug'—rich Persian fabric. See Krückmann – Erichsen – Grübl, *Die Eremitage* 92.

6 Welich D. (ed.), *China in Schloss und Garten: Chinoise Architekturen und Innenräume* (Dresden: 2010); Gaillard E., *A Taste for the Exotic: Orientalist Interiors* (London: 2011); Brunel G. (ed.), *Pagodes et dragons: Exotisme et fantaisie dans l'Europe rococo 1720–1770* (Paris: 2007); Jarry M., *Chinoiseries: Le rayonnement du goût chinois sur les arts décoratifs des XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (Freiburg: 1981).

7 Stauffer M.T., *Spiegelung und Raum*, habilitation thesis (University of Bern: 2008) (in press 2018); Lohneis H.-D., *Die deutschen Spiegelkabinette: Studien zu den Räumen des späten 17. und des frühen 18. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: 1985); Roche S. – Courage G. – Devinoy P., *Spiegel: Spiegelgalerien, Spiegelkabinette, Hand- und Wandspiegel* (Tübingen: 1985); Kreisel H., *Deutsche Spiegelkabinette* (Darmstadt: 1953).

8 Stauffer, *Spiegelung und Raum* 114–163; Toman R. (ed.), *Barock und Rokoko* (Berlin: 2002) 81; Böhmker R., *Spiegel-Räume im Zeitalter Ludwigs XIV: Ein Beitrag zur Entwicklung und Bedeutung des Spiegels im Barock*, Ph.D. thesis (University of Vienna: 1946) 32–96.



FIGURE 15.3 François Mansart (architect), Michel Corneille (painter), and anon. artisans, Mirror Cabinet (ca. 1650). Maisons-Lafitte, Château de Maisons, Apartment in Italian style (appartement à l'italienne).

IMAGE © CENTRE DES MONUMENTS NATIONAUX; PHOTO: PASCAL LEMAÎTRE.



FIGURE 15.4 *Jules Hardouin-Mansart (architect) and Charles Le Brun (artist), Mirror Hall (1678–1686). Versailles, Palace of Versailles, State apartment, view from the Salon de la Guerre towards the Salon de la Paix.*  
IMAGE © RMN-GRAND PALAIS (CHÂTEAU DE VERSAILLES).

design. The infatuation with reflective surfaces spread from France, which set the tone for the interior decoration of noble homes from the seventeenth century onwards, across all of Europe.

Mirrored rooms in the homes of nobility underwent a true golden age in the German-speaking countries, in particular during the eighteenth century.<sup>9</sup> The first cabinets to feature such mirrored surfaces began appearing in the mid-1690s.<sup>10</sup> Within a decade, the *Spiegelkabinett* developed into such an important feature of interior decoration that, as the eighteenth century progressed,

<sup>9</sup> See Stauffer, *Spiegelung und Raum* 185–190; Lohneis, *Die deutschen Spiegelkabinette*; Kreisel, *Deutsche Spiegelkabinette*; Thornton P., *Seventeenth-Century Interior Decoration in England, France and Holland* (New Haven, CT: 1979) 75–79.

<sup>10</sup> See the mirror and porcelain cabinet at Oranienburg Palace (1690s) and the *Holländisches Kabinett* at the Munich Residenz (1690s).

nearly every palace of significance built in Germany could boast a cabinet room decorated with mirrors.<sup>11</sup>

In this context it is revealing to note that there already existed a specific tradition of mirrored rooms in the family of the person who commissioned the Chinese Mirror Cabinet, Margravine Friederike Sophie Wilhelmine of Bayreuth (1709–1758). Wilhelmine was born in 1709 in Berlin as a Prussian princess.<sup>12</sup> In Oranienburg Palace, which was rebuilt and expanded between 1688 and 1695 by Wilhelmine's grandfather, Elector Friedrich III and later King Friedrich I (1657–1713), a porcelain cabinet was designed and made by Christoph Pitzler (1657–1707), and its walls were clad generously with mirrors.<sup>13</sup> This cabinet was one of the earliest known mirror rooms in the German-speaking world, which was to be followed by more in the Brandenburg-Prussian residences: in 1701, in the Charlottenburg Palace, a magnificent mirror and porcelain cabinet was installed, which Johann Friedrich Eosander von Goethe (1669–1728) had designed for Wilhelmine's grandmother, the Electress and later Queen Sophia Charlotte (1668–1705) [Fig. 15.5].<sup>14</sup> After plans by Eosander, a *Gläsernes Schafgemach* (Glass Bed Chamber) was also installed in Charlottenburg, in mirrored pilaster strips alternated with bands of green damask.<sup>15</sup>

It becomes apparent here that in both examples, the taste for then highly luxurious mirrors was coupled with the enthusiasm for no less precious porcelain objects, which included many pieces from Asia. Indeed, in buildings belonging to the House of Brandenburg-Prussia, numerous rooms were

<sup>11</sup> Lohneis, *Die deutschen Spiegelkabinette* 97.

<sup>12</sup> Krückmann P.O., "Wilhelmine von Bayreuth: Die philosophische Markgräfin", in Frank Ch. (ed.), *Aufgeklärter Kunstdiskurs und höfische Sammelpraxis: Karoline Luise von Baden im europäischen Kontext* (Munich: 2015) 222; Talkenberger H., "Selbstverständnis und bildliche Repräsentation bei Sophie von Hannover und Wilhelmine von Bayreuth", in Baumbach G. (ed.), *Frau und Bildnis 1600–1750: Barocke Repräsentationskultur an europäischen Fürstenhöfen* (Kassel: 2003) 133, 141.

<sup>13</sup> Boersch-Supan H., "Die Chinamode in Brandenburgisch-Preussischen Residenzen", in Sperlich M. (ed.), *China und Europa: Chinaverständnis und Chinamode im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: 1973) 43–45; Wittwer S., "Fragile Splendour and Political Representation: Baroque Porcelain Rooms in Prussia and Saxony as Meaningful Treasures", 36–38, available from <https://www.haughton.com/articles/2017/4/11/fragile-splendour-and-political-representation> (accessed 31.03.2018).

<sup>14</sup> Wittwer S., "Ein Spiel zwischen Schein und Sein: Die Porzellankammer von Schloss Charlottenburg im Wandel", *Jahrbuch: Stiftung Preußische Schlösser und Gärten Berlin-Brandenburg* 7, 2005 (2007) 83–93, 150–151.

<sup>15</sup> In the 1660s, a room in the Schloss Vaux le Vicomte belonging to the apartment of the wife of Nicolas Fouquet had already been furnished in this way. See Brattig P., *Das Schloss von Vaux-le-Vicomte*, Ph.D. dissertation (University of Cologne: 1998) 240–241.



FIGURE 15.5 *Johann Friedrich Eosander (architect) and anon. artisans Mirror and Porcelain Cabinet (1701–1706). Berlin, Charlottenburg Palace, Parade- and living rooms of King Frederik I, overall view, before destruction.*

IMAGE © STIFTUNG PREUSSISCHE SCHLÖSSER UND GÄRTEN BERLIN-BRANDENBURG/BILDARCHIV, OBERHOFMARSCHALLAMT/VERWALTUNG DER STAATLICHEN SCHLÖSSER UND GÄRTEN (1927–1945).

furnished in the “Chinese” style and named as such.<sup>16</sup> At the same time, in the first half of the seventeenth century, more mirror cabinets were installed, for example in the Berlin City Palace. Of particular significance for Wilhelmine’s cabinet in Bayreuth was most likely the lavishly mirrored *Goldene Galerie* (Golden Gallery), which King Friedrich II (1712–1786) had built from 1740 in the Charlottenburg Palace [Fig. 15.6].<sup>17</sup> Friedrich II was the favourite brother of the Margravine of Bayreuth, and remained in close contact with her from childhood.<sup>18</sup> Peter O. Krückmann also assumes that Wilhelmine had the mirror

16 Krückmann, “Die Eremitage” 44–45; Boersch-Supan, “Die Chinamode” 43–47.

17 Sperlich M., *Der Weiße Saal und die Goldene Galerie im Schloß Charlottenburg* (Berlin: 1986).

18 Wilhelmine makes continual references to this in her memoirs. Furthermore, the two carried out an intense correspondence between 1728 and 1758, see Volz G.B. (ed.), *Friedrich*



FIGURE 15.6 *Georg Wenzeslaus von Knobelsdorff (architect) and Johann August Nahl (sculptor, plasterer), Golden Gallery (1740–1746), Berlin, Charlottenburg Palace, new wing.*

IMAGE © STIFTUNG PREUSSISCHE SCHLÖSSER UND GÄRTEN BERLIN-BRANDENBURG/BILDARCHIV; PHOTO: LEO SEIDEL.

cabinet built in the Old Palace of the Hermitage in preparation for her brother's visit in 1754.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, one function of the room may have consisted in continuing a Brandenburg-Prussian tradition, and of putting this tradition on display in Bayreuth. Wilhelmine grew up as a Prussian princess and was 'characterized by a great pride in her social standing', which she also 'sought to preserve ... [after marriage as the Margravine of Bayreuth] within the confines of courtly etiquette'.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> *der Große und Wilhelmine von Bayreuth*, 2 vols., trans. F. von Oppeln-Bronikowski (Leipzig: 1924–1926); see also Talkenberger, "Selbstverständnis und bildliche Repräsentation" 143.

<sup>20</sup> Krückmann, "Die Eremitage" 48.

Talkenberger, "Selbstverständnis und bildliche Repräsentation" 141.

Accordingly, she 'vehemently emphasized her social standing throughout her life' and the status it carried at 'countless social events'.<sup>21</sup>

But aside from this, further functional aspects must be considered. Mirrors had a particular significance in that period, since, on the one hand, they were an extremely expensive material. On the other hand, we must take into account that surfaces arranged lavishly over a cabinet offered an unusual visual experience: they created complex spatial relationships between real and reflected space. Accordingly, mirror cabinets had established themselves in the German-speaking world of the eighteenth century as an element of interior design which fulfilled the highest demands, and in which the utmost prestige could find expression. As such, they were an extremely effective architectural device in the quest for displays of splendour. This had always been a fundamental characteristic of social elites in terms of their presentation of self. Especially in Germany and Austria, numerous dynasties were competing for rank and status.<sup>22</sup>

The symbolic capital of mirrored interiors could function on two levels: with the most opulent mirroring possible, financial means and the power associated with it could be demonstrated. But prestige was also able to be achieved through furnishings that possessed a particularly innovative character.<sup>23</sup> The mirror cabinets and halls which emerged in the eighteenth century in Germany

21 Bayreuth Wilhelmine von, *Eine preußische Königstochter: Glanz und Elend am Hofe des Soldatenkönigs in den Memoiren der Markgräfin Wilhelmine von Bayreuth*, ed. I. Weber-Kellermann, trans. A. Kolb (*Mémoires de Frédérique Sophie Wilhelmine, Margrave de Bareith, soeur de Frédéric le Grand, depuis l'anné 1706 jusqu'à 1742, écrits de sa main*, 2 vols., Brunswick: 1810 [reprint, Frankfurt am Main: 1990]) 516–517; see also Talkenberger, "Selbstverständnis und bildliche Repräsentation" 142.

22 Hahn P.M. – Schütte U., "Thesen zur Rekonstruktion höfischer Zeichensysteme in der Frühen Neuzeit", *Mitteilungen der Residenzen-Kommission der Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen* 13, 2 (2003) 19–47, at 19. See also from these authors, *Zeichen und Raum: Ausstattung und höfisches Zeremoniell in den deutschen Schlössern der Frühen Neuzeit* (Munich: 2006); Schütte U., "Architekturwahrnehmung, Zeichensetzung und Erinnerung in der Frühen Neuzeit: Die architektonische Ordnung des 'ganzen Hauses'", in Tausch H. (ed.), *Gehäuse der Mnemosyne: Architektur als Schriftform der Erinnerung* (Göttingen: 2003) 123–149.

23 'Amongst the different powers, the competition for status and prestige—especially amongst those whose position was not secured within the community of noble and princely families through a long tradition—created a compulsion (at least functioning on a subliminal level) to "stand out from the crowd". This was not without wide-reaching effects on the internal development of the arts. The trajectory of the arts and the display of opulence in courts were thus closely related'. Hahn – Schütte, "Thesen zur Rekonstruktion" 25.

exhibited an exceedingly wide range of formal diversity. This high level of variation clearly demonstrates that the various individuals commissioning the works each sought to surpass one another through ever more unusual uses of reflective surfaces. In this way, they could be certain of capturing the attention of their peers and could even hope for the interest of those of higher rank.

The unusual formal conception of Wilhelmine's Chinese Mirror Cabinet seems singular, both in comparison to the mirrored rooms in the Brandenburg-Prussian residences and to those in the local area around Bayreuth. The mirror cabinet in Ansbach Residence, in which Wilhelmine's sister Frederike Louise lived, was designed very differently; as was the one in the Würzburg Residence [Figs. 15.7, 15.8]. In the latter room, there is at least one structural similarity, in that it also used a diverse range of mirror formats and shapes. But in Würzburg, the irregular, individual shapes are not foregrounded as they are in the reflective surfaces which were embedded in the panelling of Wilhelmine's cabinet.<sup>24</sup>

For the discussion carried out in this book on "spaces and places of solitude", it is furthermore illustrative to look at the location and function of richly furnished cabinets. In all these cases, the mirror cabinet is situated in the building's sequence of rooms most intended for display—the so-called *Prunkappartement*. The rooms of such apartments were arranged one after another in a building's wing in enfilade fashion, resulting in a stacked structure. This stacking meant that a room could only be reached 'when all other rooms had been traversed on the way'.<sup>25</sup> Such apartments essentially comprised three different room types: the *antichambre* (antechamber), the *chambre* (bedroom), and the *cabinet* (cabinet, study, or boudoir). These could be connected to additional smaller side rooms like wardrobes or alcoves. Both practically and symbolically, this sequential arrangement meant that as visitors advanced inward from the main entrance near the *antichambre*, they increasingly built up a distance to the outside world.<sup>26</sup> The accessibility of a room decreased across these 'gradients of introversion', while the embellishment and degree of stately

<sup>24</sup> See among others Lusin, J., *Das Spiegelkabinett der Residenz Würzburg: Entstehung, Zerstörung und Wiedergeburt* (Würzburg: 2015); Kummer St., "Das Spiegelkabinett Friedrich Carls von Schönborn", *Würzburg heute* 45 (1988) 53–57; see also Lohneis, *Die deutschen Spiegelkabinette*; Kreisel, *Deutsche Spiegelkabinette*.

<sup>25</sup> Prinz W., *Das französische Schloss der Renaissance: Form und Bedeutung der Architektur, ihre geschichtlichen und gesellschaftlichen Grundlagen* (Berlin: 1985) 129; also see Mérot A., *Retraites mondaines: Aspects de la décoration intérieure à Paris, au XVIIe siècle* (Paris: 1990) 11–13.

<sup>26</sup> Hoppe St., "Appartement", in Paravicini W. (ed.), *Höfe und Residenzen im spätmittelalterlichen Reich: Bilder und Begriffe*, with the assistance of J. Hirschbiegel – J. Wetzlaufer, *Residenzenforschung* 15, II (Ostfildern: 2005) 413.



FIGURE 15.7 Leopold Retti (architect) and anon. artisans, Mirror Cabinet (ca. 1740), Ansbach Residence, state apartment.

IMAGE © BAYERISCHE SCHLÖSSERVERWALTUNG, MUNICH; PHOTO: LUCINDE WEISS.



FIGURE 15.8 Balthasar Neumann (architect), Johann Wolfgang von der Auwera (sculptor), Antonio Bossi (sculptor, plasterer), Johann Baptist Thalhofer (painter), Anton Josef Höglner (painter), Georg Anton Urlaub (painter), Mirror Cabinet (1740–1745). Würzburg, Würzburg Residence, Southern Imperial Rooms, Reconstruction (1979–1987).

IMAGE © BAYERISCHE SCHLÖSSERVERWALTUNG, MUNICH; PHOTO: MARIA CUSTODIS.

representation increased.<sup>27</sup> The *chambre* generally served as the culmination point of such representation.<sup>28</sup> The cabinet room behind it was a much more introverted room. Generally speaking, its dimensions were smaller than the preceding rooms, its furnishing was especially extravagant, and it was reserved for only a few select visitors.<sup>29</sup> Mirror cabinets thus came to be situated at this point of the sequence of rooms. When apartments had multiple cabinets, as is the case in the Old Palace of the Hermitage, the mirror cabinet often served as the final room. Consequently it had the most exclusive character, dedicated to silent contemplation and intimate discussions. A proximity to the theme of "spaces and places of solitude" is manifested in this relative isolation. In other words, a kind of refuge manifests itself, which evolved historically out of the *studiolo* of the Renaissance.<sup>30</sup>

### A Place of Retreat

Another connection with the theme of "spaces and places of solitude" consists in the Chinese Mirror Cabinet being located in the annex of a building which is referred to as a hermitage: the Old Palace had been constructed from 1715 to ca. 1723 by order of Margrave Georg Wilhelm von Brandenburg-Bayreuth (1678–1726). The palace was built on a woodland site not far from Bayreuth by Johann Heinrich Endrich following the designs of the court architect Johann David Räntz. The site had belonged to the margraviate since 1616, and had served as a menagerie under Margrave Christian Ernst (1644–1712) since 1666. The building was designed as a four-winged quadrangle structure with a spacious marble hall in the centre of the northern wing. The hall is flanked by chambers on two sides; six hermit cells are lined along each chamber, leading

<sup>27</sup> Ibidem 413.

<sup>28</sup> Translating the term 'chambre' as 'bedroom' is somewhat imprecise, as the room also functioned as a living room and reception room.

<sup>29</sup> Mérot, *Retraites* 11–13; Thornton, *Seventeenth-Century Interior Decoration* 57.

<sup>30</sup> See also the contribution of Christiane Hessler in this book, as well as Mérot A., "Du *studiolo* au cabinet: L'art d'habiter entre histoire de l'art et anthropologie sociale", in *Les Passions d'un historien: Mélanges en l'honneur de Jean-Pierre Poussou* (Paris: 2010) 1683–1692; Thornton D., *The Scholar in His Study: Ownership and Experience in Renaissance Italy* (New Haven, CT – London: 1997); Liebenwein W., *Studiolo: Die Entstehung eines Raumtyps und seine Entwicklung um 1600* (Berlin: 1977); Mérot, *Retraites* 11–13.

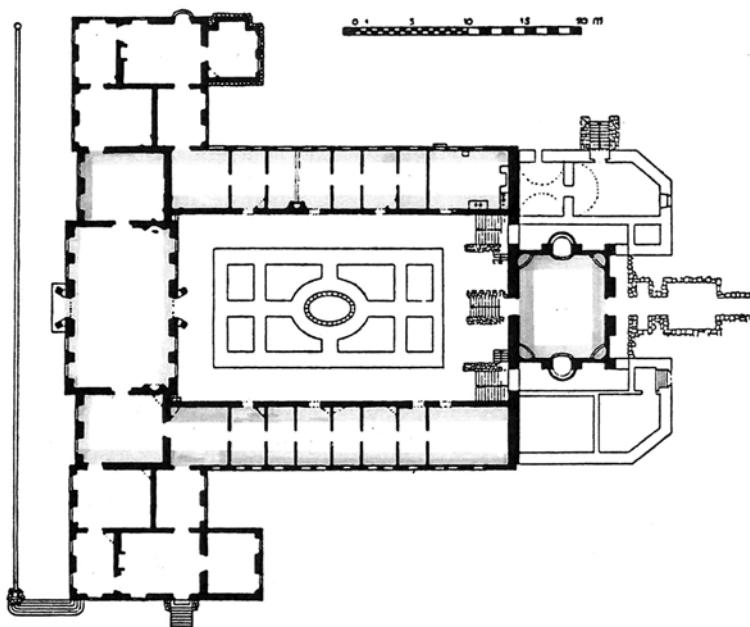


FIGURE 15.9 Erich Bachmann, *Plan of the Old Palace. Bayreuth, Hermitage*.  
IMAGE © BAYERISCHE SCHLÖSSERVERWALTUNG, MUNICH.

into a grotto structure on the southern end that, in Georg Wilhelm's time, served as the entrance to the Old Palace [Fig. 15.9].<sup>31</sup>

Margrave Georg Wilhelm and Margravine Sophia von Sachsen-Weissenfels (1684–1752) used the Hermitage together with a select circle of trusted courtiers as a refuge from the highly regimented life in the residence. For this, a specific order was founded, which bore the name “Ordre de la sincerité”.<sup>32</sup> Reports from Carl Ludwig von Pöllnitz (1692–1775) contain details on the rules governing the sojourns and customs of order-members. These sources recount that the courtiers dressed in hermit's frocks and spent their nights in the spartan cells. Only the

<sup>31</sup> Krückmann, “Wilhelmine von Bayreuth” 225; Krückmann – Erichsen – Grübel, *Die Eremitage in Bayreuth* 7–13; Hansmann W., *Zauber des Barock und Rokoko* (Cologne: 2000) 238; Krückmann, “Die Eremitage” 25–35; Frenzel U., *Beiträge zur Geschichte der barocken Schloss- und Gartenanlagen des Bayreuther Hofes*, Ph.D. dissertation (University of Erlangen, Nuremberg) (Munich: 1958) 105–115; Pöllnitz Carl Ludwig von, *Nouveaux mémoires du Baron Pöllnitz contenant l'histoire de sa vie, et la relation de ses premiers voyages* (Frankfurt am Main, Aux dépens de la Compagnie: 1738), vol. 1, 391–392.

<sup>32</sup> This dynastic and courtly order for Brandenburg-Bayreuth was founded in 1705, and as such, before Georg Wilhelm's ascension to power. See Krückmann, “Die Eremitage” 30.

margrave and the margravine had modest apartments available to them in the rooms flanking the hall. Meals were taken together in the central hall, and were eaten from earthenware crockery with wooden spoons. After lunch, the “hermits” were each called upon to withdraw for a certain time into the hermit cells, which were located at various points in the surrounding forest. As was typical for a courtly hermitage, entertainment was also provided: readings and discussions took place, and the dinners were elaborate and often brought to a close with a ball.<sup>33</sup> Lastly, a *Kirchweihfest* (church consecration festival) took place every year in the Hermitage, during which the court could enjoy itself through various forms of public entertainment. These included bric-a-brac and food stalls, taverns, a dancing area, and a maypole.<sup>34</sup> At this point it would be remiss not to mention that it was the fundamental function of the *maison de plaisirance* to provide precisely the higher nobility with an exclusive place of refuge. There, an altered ceremonial was used, and there were special *divertissements*. As such, the courtly hermitage is to be seen as a specific variant of the *maison de plaisirance*.<sup>35</sup>

### A Palace for Wilhelmine

Fundamental changes to the structure of the building and the use of the Old Palace occurred in 1735, when Friedrich von Bayreuth (1711–1763) took over the affairs of governance.<sup>36</sup> In the same year he gifted the entire Hermitage as a birthday present to his wife, Margravine Wilhelmine von Bayreuth. She immediately began carrying out construction projects, for which she was also involved in the design process.<sup>37</sup> However, this refers only to the Old Palace, for which the building work began in 1736 and was concentrated on the North

33 Pöllnitz, *Nouveaux mémoires* 391–392; Krückmann, “Die Eremitage” 27–35.

34 Krückmann – Erichsen – Grübel, *Die Eremitage in Bayreuth* 13. A comparison of the hermitage festivities with chapters on courtly *divertissements* in German ceremonial literature of the time is informative, for example in Rohr Julius Bernard von, *Einleitung zur Ceremoniel-Wissenschaft der grossen Herren* (Berlin, Rüdiger: 1729) 735–742.

35 See Gansera-Söffing St., “Das Alte Schloß der Eremitage zu Bayreuth in der ersten Bauphase unter Markgraf Georg Wilhelm (ca. 1715–1722)”, *Archiv für Geschichte von Oberfranken* 70 (1990) 448–449. See also the contribution of Arnold Witte in this volume, as well as his “Hermits in High Society: Private Retreats in Late ‘Seicento’ Rome”, *Melbourne Art Journal* 9, 10 (2007) 104–119 and his *The Artful Hermitage: The Palazzetto Farnese as a Counter-Reformation “diaeta”*, LermArte 2 (Rome: 2008).

36 Volz, *Friedrich der Große* 282.

37 Merten K., *Der Bayreuther Hofarchitekt Joseph Saint-Pierre, 1708/9–1754* (Frankfurt am Main: 1964) 18; Krückmann, “Wilhelmine von Bayreuth” 225; Krückmann, “Die Eremitage” 24; Von Bayreuth, *Eine preußische Königstochter* 302–304.

Wing. There, a pavilion with five rooms was added onto both ends of the central hall. The two preexisting rooms between the hall and the annexes were also restructured. This created two apartments, one each for the margravine and her husband, and both of which upheld the highest standards of prestige. Wilhelmine did not interfere with the structure of the tract containing the hermit cells; however, she set up the rooms adjoining her apartment for her own personal use and for her housekeeping. The cells in the wing on the opposite side, which adjoined the apartment of the margrave, on the other hand, remained untouched. All told, the resulting building comes across as a *maison de plaisir*, offering a highly sophisticated setting in which to receive guests.<sup>38</sup>

It's therefore worth questioning to what extent the site—and the *Spiegelkabinett* in particular—still retains any aspects of retreat or withdrawal. As Krückmann has argued, with its handover into Wilhelmine's possession, the Old Palace lost its function as a hermitage of the margravial order. 'This had become possible since Friedrich had given the order a more general designation with the name "The Order of the Red Eagle".'<sup>39</sup> But the old name Hermitage was retained, and Wilhelmine also preserved the existing hermit cells in the surrounding forest. She even had another hermit hut built for her own personal use, which was situated on the property behind a "Ruin Theatre".<sup>40</sup>

Moreover, the Old Palace certainly did serve as a place for Wilhelmine to withdraw to from the palatial residence in Bayreuth, with its crowded royal household and all its ceremonial protocol. The margravine wrote about this need for retreat in various forms. In her memoirs, for example, which cover the period from 1707 to 1742, she once wrote: 'I prefer happiness and tranquillity to power and the lustrous side of life. I love the world and its joys, but I hate vacuous slavery to pleasure. My character [...] is not suited to the court'.<sup>41</sup> In her

38 Krückmann, "Wilhelmine von Bayreuth" 225–229; Krückmann – Erichsen – Grübel, *Die Eremitage in Bayreuth* 7–13; Krückmann, "Die Eremitage" 39–48.

39 Krückmann, "Die Eremitage" 35.

40 Habermann S. "Repräsentation und Privatleben in den Schlössern von Markgraf Friedrich und Markgräfin Wilhelmine", in Berger G. (ed.), *Wilhelmine von Bayreuth heute: Das kulturelle Erbe der Markgräfin*, Archiv für Geschichte von Oberfranken (Bayreuth: 2009) 288; Von Bayreuth, *Eine preußische Königstochter* 192; Wilhelmine's hermit hut is no longer standing, but is depicted on the hermitage map by Johann Gottlieb Riedel (ca. 1760/65) and by Carl Christian Riedel (1794).

41 '[I]ch ziehe das Glück und die Ruhe der Macht und dem Glanz des Lebens vor. Ich liebe die Welt und ihre Freuden, aber ich hasse die leere Vergnügenssucht. Mein Charakter [...] eignet sich nicht für den Hof'. German translation from the French manuscript, in: Von Bayreuth, *Eine preußische Königstochter* 114; see also Talkenberger, "Selbstverständnis und bildliche Repräsentation" 142.

autobiography, she goes on to speak of intrigues, lies, and deception in the court. All of this disgusted Wilhelmine, whose character, she asserted, was devoted to contemplation, honesty, and goodness.<sup>42</sup> In letters to Voltaire (1694–1778), the margravine seems to express a need for retreat and moral conduct by referring to herself as an abbess, and her friendship circle as a monastic community.<sup>43</sup>

Wilhelmine's critique of courtly life was thus essentially related to her need for social seclusion. Heike Talkenberger has made the point that 'her pride in her status' at the same time 'continually (bound) her to the cultural model of the court'.<sup>44</sup> This contradiction is made pronounced in a letter which the margravine wrote to her brother Friedrich II in 1737: 'I leave all (the courtly) constraint and flee from it as much as I am able. I seek to lead a quiet life and to protect my freedom, and that is impossible to achieve if one demands that vain respect which is customary in most courts'.<sup>45</sup> In this irresolvable contradiction, the Hermitage offered a refuge which she could seek out when the need arose. In contrast to the residence, the palace in the Hermitage was a far more intimate setting with relaxed ceremonial duties, where the margravine could retire with a small, select entourage.

One could furthermore argue that Wilhelmine's palace also represented a kind of solitary space within the broader context of her biography. She was born in 1709 in Berlin to Sophia Dorothea von Hanover (1687–1757) and Friedrich Wilhelm I, king of Prussia (1688–1740). There, she was raised with expectations of marrying into a greater position of power, including the prospect of a marriage with the English heir apparent. But these plans came to naught for reasons that cannot be detailed here.<sup>46</sup> Finally, in 1731, Wilhelmine was married below her status to the Hereditary Prince Friedrich von Bayreuth, a distant relation from the Brandenburg-Bayreuth lineage. Wilhelmine herself speaks in her memoirs of sacrificing herself for the sake of the dynasty. So it was out of loyalty to her family that she entered into a marriage that did not

42 Talkenberger, "Selbstverständnis und bildliche Repräsentation" 142.

43 See Krückmann, "Wilhelmine von Bayreuth" 231; Talkenberger, "Selbstverständnis und bildliche Repräsentation" 149, 150.

44 Talkenberger, "Selbstverständnis und bildliche Repräsentation" 143.

45 'Ich lasse all [den höfischen] Zwang und fliehe ihn, soviel ich vermag. Ich suche ein stilles Leben zu führen und meine Freiheit zu wahren, und das ist undurchführbar, wenn man jenen eitlen Respekt fordert, der an den meisten Höfen Brauch ist'. German translation from the French manuscript, in: Volz, *Friedrich der Große* 365.

46 Krückmann, "Wilhelmine von Bayreuth" 222; Von Bayreuth, *Eine preußische Königstochter* 246; Talkenberger, "Selbstverständnis und bildliche Repräsentation" 144–145.

befit her.<sup>47</sup> For this reason, her life in the *Residenz* city of Bayreuth is seen by many biographers as a forced retreat from the spotlight, from the power centre of the Berlin court—and in this sense, her stays in the Hermitage represent yet a further retreat. But this perspective lacks nuance, for the connection with Friedrich must have initially been characterised by a certain affection—this much can at least be determined from the enthusiastic statements in the memoirs, providing they were not entirely strategic in character.<sup>48</sup> In any case, the Principality of Bayreuth experienced a cultural flowering under Wilhelmine. The margravine gathered architects, artists, musicians, and scholars of European distinction around her; likewise, it was Wilhelmine who gave the Bayreuth Opera House its start.

### Content in Every Detail

As for the *Chinesisches Spiegelkabinett* in particular, we have already established that it must be considered the *Prunkappartement*'s least accessible room, due to its placement at the end of the suite. We have also mentioned that cabinets were essentially rooms of personal contemplation—for which reason they were sometimes used as oratories. Therefore, the question we must address here in conclusion is the following: can the room's decoration also be brought into connection with the theme of a "space of solitude"?

The iconographic programme—with Chinese scenes on wall reliefs and ceiling stucco work—shows East Asia as it was imagined in Europe at that time: depicted are gallant scenes with people strolling in pairs or small groups, riding, hunting, or sailing in boats. Opposite them stand individual figures carrying out activities or walking towards pagoda-like structures in which to devote themselves to contemplation [Figs. 15.2, 15.10]. Depictions of domestic and wild animals are alternated with mythical creatures; between them are variously shaped small buildings. All of these scenes appear initially to be placed together without a direct, narrative connection. However, the connection is an indirect one, in relation to the worldly side of courtly life back then,

47 Krückmann, "Wilhelmine von Bayreuth" 224; Von Bayreuth, *Eine preußische Königstochter* 85, 247; Talkenberger, "Selbstverständnis und bildliche Repräsentation" 143–144; Krückmann, "Die Eremitage" 43.

48 As far as the strategic aspect goes, it must also be added that Wilhelmine expressly noted in her recounts that they were not intended for publication. However, we must assume that the memoirs were not written without any relation to *repraesentatio*. See Von Bayreuth, *Eine preußische Königstochter* 255, 261.



FIGURE 15.10 *Anon. artisans, Cabinet with mirror and chinoiseries (ca. 1750). Bayreuth, Hermitage, Old Palace.*

IMAGE © BAYERISCHE SCHLÖSSERVERWALTUNG, MUNICH; PHOTO: ACHIM BUNZ.

the so-called *divertissements*. These *divertissements* take place in small groups, in which a moment of retreat is clearly recognisable. The retreat in question is from the multitudinous court society, and approximates hermetic practices in the scenes that depict contemplative individuals in pagodas.

As for the significance of the mirror, it must be noted that it had a wide range of connotations in the early modern period. In Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia*, it is accounted as an attribute of ephemerality, prodigality, and vanity—yet also of prudence, purity, and truth. Regarding theoretical discourses on mirrors, I only wish to point out that in Jesuitical tracts on the subject of light, the mirror is posited as a 'reflector' in relation to a spiritually inflated light metaphor.<sup>49</sup> But how can these connotations be pinned down?

49 See the frontispiece in Kircher Athanasius, *Ars magna lucis et umbrae* (Rome, Scheus: 1646); Scheiner Christoph, *Rosa Ursina Sive Sol* (Bracciano, Phaeus: 1630) and from the same author in *Oculus, h.e.:fundamentum opticum* (Innsbruck, Daniel Paur: 1619); Schott Gaspar, *Magia universalis naturae et artis. Pars i: Magia optica* (Würzburg, Schönwetter:

Confronted with a wall decorated by shards of mirrors—and considering that mirrors at the time were markedly expensive, and therefore served as an ostentatious sign of luxury—we must consider another question: are we to read this as a gesture depicting the overcoming of opulence, its symbolic shattering? Or does presenting the reflective surfaces in fragments serve to amplify the sense of costliness and fragility? Such questions can be neither definitively refuted nor proven. Another approach to the meaning of the cabinet is produced if we read the mirror pieces of the cabinet not so much as fragments—as the modern name of the cabinet might lead us to do—but rather if we view every piece as a consciously cut form. The fact that every individual reflective surface is framed could serve to corroborate this viewpoint.

The great diversity of sometimes unusual individual shapes has its foundations in the cultural context of the Rococo period. The style and the concept of Rococo stands in a close relation to the term of 'rocaille', a French word which means 'shellwork', but also 'cobbles' or 'rubble', as derived from 'roc' ('rock'). The purport implied in these concepts of the (naturally) grown and raw, irregular form, however, does not just bear a relation to the Chinese Mirror Cabinet, but also to the appearance of the Old Palace. The façades of the building are largely fitted with rough-cut ashlar or porous tuff, making it seem as if

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1657); Zahn Johann, *Oculus artificialis teledioptricus sive telescopium* 3 (Würzburg, Quirin Heil: 1686); Traber Zacharias, *Nervus opticus* (Vienna, Fievet: 1675). See also Leinkauf T., *Mundus combinatus: Studien zur Struktur der barocken Universalwissenschaft am Beispiel Athanasius Kirchers SJ (1602–1680)* (Berlin: 1993) 334–341; Chevalley C., "L'Ars Magna Lucis et Umbræ d'Athanase Kircher: Néoplatonisme, hermétisme et 'nouvelle philosophie'", *Baroque* 12 (1987) 95–110; Ashworth W.B. Jr., "Catholicism and Early Modern Science", in Lindberg D. – Numbers R. (eds.), *God and Nature: Historical Essays on the Encounter Between Christianity and Science* (Berkeley, CA: 1986) 136–166; Mayer-Deutsch A., *Das Musaeum Kircherianum: Kontemplative Momente, historische Rekonstruktion, Bildrhetorik* (Berlin – Zurich: 2010); Stauffer M.T., "Mirror Arts: Early Modern Catoptric Devices in Books, Collections, and Demonstrations", in Zirpolo L. (ed.), *The Most Noble of the Senses: Anamorphosis, Trompe-L'Oeil, and Other Optical Illusions in Early Modern Art* (Ramsey, NJ: 2016) 67–86, and from the same author "Spiegelkünste: Frühneuzeitliche katoptrische Maschinen in Büchern, Sammlungen und Demonstrationen", in Oster A. (ed.), *Kunst und/oder Technik? Funktion und Neupositionierung eines Dialogs in den Literaturen und Wissenskulturen der Frühen Neuzeit* (Freiburg im Breisgau: 2015) 159–186. The essential meaning of light in connection with cognition as well as its mystical, ethical-moral, and sublime/anagogic dimension is also discussed in the epilogues of a number of works, such as in Kirchner, *Ars magna lucis et umbræ*, Traber, *Nervus opticus*, or Zahn, *Oculus artificialis*.



FIGURE 15.11 *Johann David Rantz (architect), Southern wing of the Old Palace (1715–1718). Bayreuth, Hermitage.*

IMAGE © BAYERISCHE SCHLÖSSERVERWALTUNG, MUNICH; PHOTO: ACHIM BUNZ.

it were “grown” from stone [Fig. 15.11].<sup>50</sup> This design principle has for its part a relation to the rock caves into which the ancient hermits retreated.<sup>51</sup> The palace also had an artificial cave, namely the aforementioned grotto in the South Wing, whose surfaces were dominated by stones, shellwork, and slag glass [Fig. 15.12]. Other grottos are found on the grounds of the Hermitage, as are buildings made of rusticated or porous stone like the Parnassus at the palace drive or the “Ruin Theatre”<sup>52</sup>

<sup>50</sup> The exception is formed by the central building in the North Wing, which is clad with smooth stone slabs.

<sup>51</sup> At the time, there were numerous engravings of ancient hermits circulating, see in connection with this the introduction by Christine Göttler to this volume.

<sup>52</sup> Hermann Bauer discusses in his book on the *Rocaille* various structural principles of this ornamental motif; in doing so, he draws a connection between the ‘natural’ and the ‘ruinous’. See Bauer H., *Rocaille: Zur Herkunft und zum Wesen eines Ornament-Motivs*

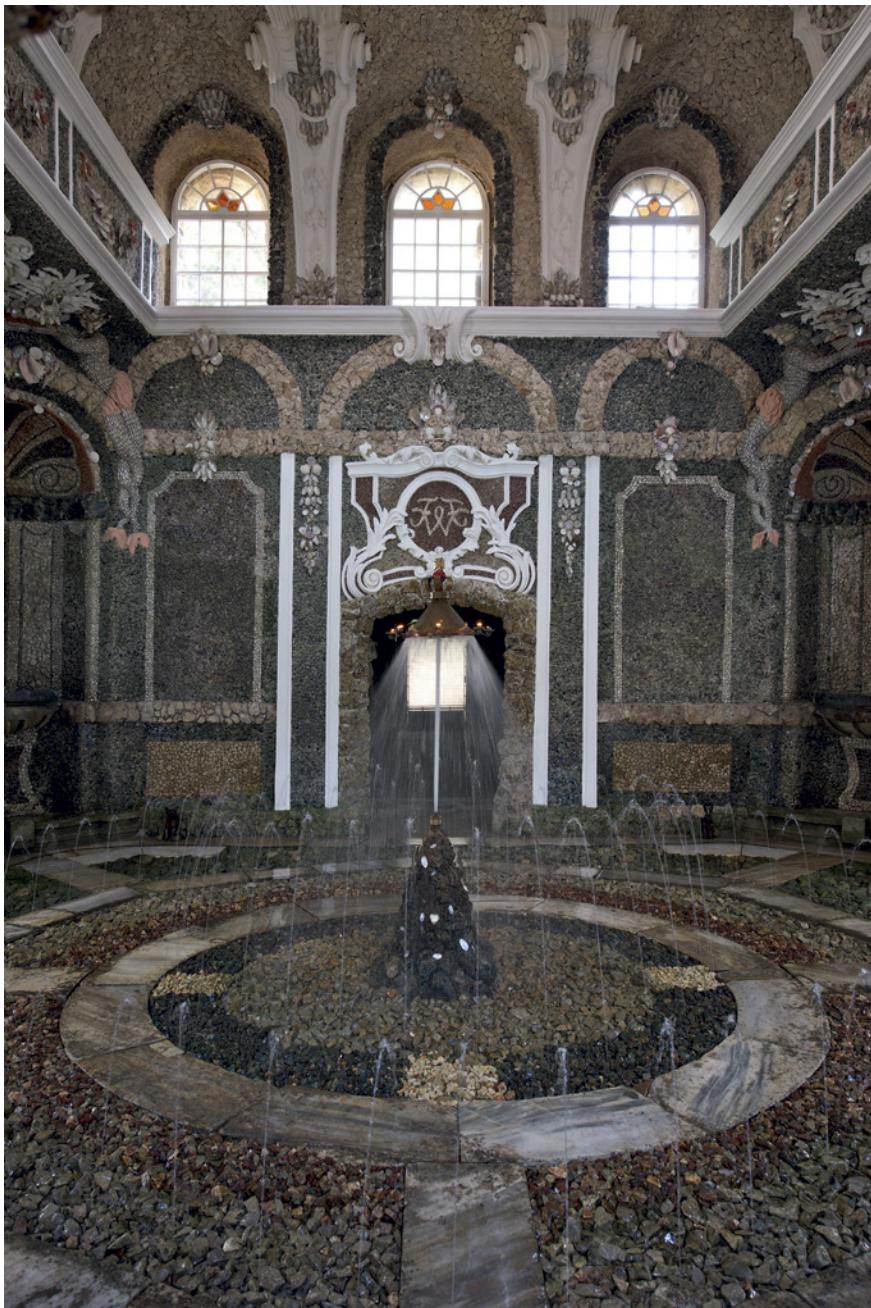


FIGURE 15.12 *Johann David Rantz (architect) and anon. artisans, Grotto (1715–1723), Bayreuth, Hermitage, Old Palace.*

IMAGE © BAYERISCHE SCHLÖSSERVERWALTUNG, MUNICH; PHOTO: ACHIM BUNZ.

At this point, I would like to return to a biographical consideration. Wilhelmine presumably wrote her memoirs between 1742 and 1747 in a room which would later be converted into the *Chinesisches Kabinett*.<sup>53</sup> The furnishing before the conversion was depicted by the margravine in her autobiography: 'It is painted brown and decorated with miniature flowers'.<sup>54</sup> Around 1750, the room where Wilhelmine reflected over her life was adorned with reflective surfaces. I'm therefore tempted to see a reference to a place of reflection and contemplation in the mirror fragments.

That Wilhelmine was a highly contemplative woman is shown in various aspects of her life and activities. During her childhood and youth in Berlin, at the instigation of her mother she received a challenging education in languages, literature, history, painting, and music, and developed a preference for philosophy. In Bayreuth, she continued to dedicate herself to reading with enthusiasm, which led to her amassing a significant library.<sup>55</sup> The most important works in Wilhelmine's philosophical readings were not restricted to Enlightenment works, but also included some writings by East Asian authors and publications about East Asia. Toward the end of the seventeenth century, philosophical writings from China began to be distributed in Europe, and it was above all Confucius who was met with admiration. His works were also present in the margravine's impressive library, which comprised over 4,000 books in total.<sup>56</sup> So if the differently shaped pieces of mirror in the cabinet are taken to refer to the reflective moment in Wilhelmine's lifestyle, then the elements of chinoiserie may reveal a philosophical leaning. Krückmann provides support

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(Berlin: 1962) 55–56. See also Bauer H. – Sedlmayr H., *Rokoko: Struktur und Wesen einer europäischen Epoche* (Cologne: 1991).

53 It can be presumed that the memoirs were produced in the period in which Wilhelmine and her brother had experienced a falling out; notes on the printing history can be found in Volz, *Friedrich der Große* 49–58; cf. Talkenberger, "Selbstverständnis und bildliche Repräsentation" 141.

54 'Es ist braun lackiert und mit Miniaturblumen ausgemalt'. German translation from French manuscript, in: Wilhelmine, *Eine preussische Königstochter* 471.

55 For this, see in particular Harbeck-Barthel D., "Meine Bibliothek ist jetzt geordnet: Der Aufbau von Wilhelmines französischer Bibliothek", in Berger G. (ed.), *Wilhelmine von Bayreuth heute: Das kulturelle Erbe der Markgräfin*, Archiv für Geschichte von Oberfranken (Bayreuth: 2009) 151–172. On Wilhelmine's education see Krückmann, "Wilhelmine von Bayreuth" 223; Talkenberger, "Selbstverständnis und bildliche Repräsentation" 145.

56 The collection included, among others, the then highly popular book of Jean de la Brune, *La morale de Confucius: Philosophie de la Chine* (Amsterdam, Savouret: 1688). See also: Krückmann, "Die Eremitage" 45 and, on the library, Harbek-Barthel, "Meine Bibliothek" 151–158, 159–172.

for such an interpretation, claiming that the chinoiserie in Wilhelmine's apartment cannot be a mere whimsy, since he is convinced that she 'imbued every detail with content'.<sup>57</sup>

The margravine was well aware of her inclination to reflect exhaustively both on things and on herself. This is revealed in various testimonial documents, of which only a few are reproduced here. In the autobiography, she notes of the room which later became the *Chinesisches Spiegelkabinett*: 'This is where I write these memoirs and spend so many hours devoted to contemplation'.<sup>58</sup> In a letter to her brother Friedrich, she states: 'I devote myself [to mental activity] as much as my health allows it. [...] I devote the morning to physics and philosophy, and a few hours of the afternoon to reading works of history'.<sup>59</sup> This engagement with history resulted in historical events from antiquity being depicted in the ceiling paintings in Wilhelmine's apartment. Additionally, in her memoirs, she writes: 'Perhaps people might find it strange that I have chosen all of these historical subjects for the decoration of my ceiling, it is simply that I love all that is *speculative*'.<sup>60</sup> In the memoirs, one of the explanations that she gave for her need for seclusion was that she 'always had a penchant for the philosophical'.<sup>61</sup>

Thus, it is not surprising that Wilhelmine was also portrayed as a thinker. Her brother Friedrich erected a sculpture in the palatial gardens of Sanssouci which depicts her as a philosopher.<sup>62</sup> In a portrait painted by Antoine Pesne around 1750 Wilhelmine is represented in the pose of the thinker and with a pensive facial expression [Fig. 15.13]. Rather unsurprisingly, the artist chose to portray her with a book in her hand.<sup>63</sup> And yet more books are strewn casually

57 Krückmann, "Die Eremitage" 43; see also Krückmann, "Wilhelmine von Bayreuth" 226.

58 'Hier schreibe ich diese Memoiren und verbringe viele, dem Nachdenken geweihte Stunden zu'. German translation of French manuscript, in: Von Bayreuth, *Eine preußische Königstochter* 471; Krückmann, "Die Eremitage" 47.

59 'Ich widme mich [der geistigen Betätigung] soviel, als meine Gesundheit es zulässt. [...] Den Vormittag widme ich der Physik und der Philosophie, und ein paar Nachmittagsstunden lese ich Geschichtswerke'. German translation of French manuscript, in: Wilhelmine an Friedrich (Volz, *Friedrich der Große* 26).

60 'Vielleicht mag man es seltsam finden, dass ich all diese geschichtlichen Sujets zur Zierde meiner Plafonds gewählt habe, allein, ich liebe alles *Spekulative*'. Von Bayreuth, *Eine preußische Königstochter* 420, my emphasis.

61 '[...] stets den Stich ins Philosophische [hatte]'. Ibidem 114.

62 Talkenberger, "Selbstverständnis und bildliche Repräsentation" 159 (note 93); Krückmann, "Die Eremitage" 130.

63 The book is Louis de Sacy's *Traité de l'amitié* (Paris, Moreau: 1703), also published in English: *An Essay upon Friendship* (London, John Wyat: 1704).



FIGURE 15.13 *Antoine Pesne, Markgräfin Wilhelmine von Brandenburg-Bayreuth in Pilgertracht (ca. 1750). Oil on canvas, 145 x 111 cm. Potsdam, Sanssouci.*  
IMAGE © STIFTUNG PREUSSISCHE SCHLÖSSER UND GÄRTEN BERLIN-BRANDENBURG/BILDARCHIV.

beside her. That Wilhelmine's artistic activity is referenced through a musical score and paintbrushes and pastels can only be mentioned in passing at this juncture. For the theme being discussed here, the fact that Wilhelmine is depicted in pilgrim's clothes in a kind of cave is illuminating. She appears, thus, as a seeker with mental and aesthetic objectives in her rocky space of reflection. With this, the theme of retreat moves back into view, and with it reflection and creative activity.

Against this backdrop, we can say that Wilhelmine's contemplation and writing received their special place in the *Chinesisches Spiegelkabinett*. In connection with her five years of work writing the memoirs, which took place in this room, the cabinet can be seen in particular as a place of retreat into memories. And the fact that recorded memories are always, by nature, fragmentary is illuminating. For a life story cannot be told comprehensively—much more, it consists of fragments, set in relation to one another. I view these interrelated discursive fragments as bearing a specific relation to the mirror pieces on the walls of the cabinet, which for their part enter into complex relationships with the other decorative elements of the room.

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## PART 5

*Solitude in Antiquarian and Natural History*

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# The Prophetess in the Woods: The Early Modern Debate about Veleda, Aurinia, and Vola\*

*Bernd Roling*

## Introduction

Even well into the early modern period, the Flemish and Germanic world was familiar with a type of saint characterised by radical seclusion, namely the famous *incluses* who, as suffering saints, dwelt, often enclosed within a limited space, at the edge of churches, convents, or city walls. Many of them, such as Luitgard of Tongeren, Yvette of Huy, and Margareth of Magdeburg, had the gift of prophecy and, on the basis of these abilities, were held in high honour by the local populace;<sup>1</sup> others, more eccentric figures such as Christina of St. Trond, were so frightened by proximity to other people that, as her biographer Thomas of Cantimpré reports, she even climbed up trees to avoid them.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps this influential phenomenon in the history of piety had a prehistory that runs back through early Germanic Christianity and past it, into pagan pre-history. Prophetesses who had made their home in the wilderness, in *solitudo*, were not unknown among the pagan Germanic peoples either. The best known of them was the prophetess Veleda, who lived in the first century AD.<sup>3</sup> Her role,

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\* For the translation I am indebted to Orla Mulholland, for helpful discussions to Dorothee Huff (Göttingen) and the participants of the “Spaces, Places and Times of Solitude” conference in Bern.

- 1 For a good introduction into the phenomenon of the anchoresses see the excellent study of Mulder-Bakker A.B., *Lives of the Anchoresses: The Rise of the Urban Recluse in Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia, PA: 2005), see there e.g. on Yvette of Huy 51–77, on Margareth of Magdeburg 148–173.
- 2 Thomas of Cantimpré, *The Collected Saints Lives: Abbot John of Cantimpre, Christina the Astonishing, Margaret of Ypres, and Lutgard of Aywières*, ed. B. Newman, trans. M.H. King (Turnhout: 2008), Christina the Astonishing, § 9, 132. Similar cases of saints, climbing trees, are recorded in Ireland, see Chadwick N., *The Age of the Saints in the Early Celtic Church* (Oxford: 1963) 109–111.
- 3 A wonderful and well documented study on the role of the prophetess in old German and Norse mythology is given by Samplonius K., “From Veleda to the Völva: Aspects of Female Divination in Germanic Europe”, in Mulder-Bakker A.B. (ed.), *Sanctity and Motherhood*.

in particular, would preoccupy scholars of the early modern world, who had first-hand knowledge of the inclusions of Flanders. The present study aims to show how, in the case of this striking figure, out of the key idea of *solitudo* it was possible to generate a construction of tradition that ran from the ancient world to the Middle Ages. The study centres on the milieu of the German and Scandinavian antiquaries who from around 1650 devoted their efforts to the figure of Veleda and were the first group of early modern scholars to attempt to set her in a wider context. The focus will be on four scholars of antiquity, all in the broadest sense 'baroque', and their theories, each of which presented in turn a more ambitious explanation: the German writers in Latin Johann Saubert (1638–1688), Johann Georg Keysler (1693–1743), and Gottfried Schütze, and the Swedish antiquary Johan Göransson (1712–1769).

Let us first ask what ancient historiography had to tell about Veleda, this curious figure who seems to have had such a great influence.<sup>4</sup> Tacitus discusses her in a number of his works and links her strongly with exclusion and the wilderness. The key passages are in the *Histories*. The prophetess Veleda was from the tribe of the *Bructeri*; according to Tacitus she was considered to be the driving force behind the uprising against the Roman rule of Julius Civilis and the Batavians, for in AD 70 under the Emperor Vespasian she had prophesied victory to this half-Romanised rebel leader. It seems that she was consulted continuously as the conflict progressed. Her power grew with the accuracy of her prophecies and the successes of the Germanic tribes against the Roman occupiers; indeed, as Tacitus adds, she was worshipped by her people as a goddess. As the revolt against the empire escalated further, Veleda received from the rebel tribes the gift of a trireme that the Batavians had captured. The captive garrison commander Munius Lupercus was even intended to be handed over to her as a hostage, but he was killed on the way to her secret abode. The power of her position must have been vast.<sup>5</sup> A few chapters later, Tacitus describes how Veleda announced her prophecies. Apparently she was in the forest, concealed from public view and without other contact with the public, residing in

*Essays on Holy Mothers in the Middle Ages* (New York, NY: 1995) 69–99. For a recent view see e.g. Horst S., *Merlin und die völva : Weissagungen im Altnordischen* (Munich: 2010), esp. 39–48. My study will focus on the early modern debate, not discussed by Samplonius.

<sup>4</sup> For a recent survey of the classical authorities on Veleda and her sisters see e.g. Baltrusch D.B., "Und was sagt Thusnelda? Zu Macht und Einfluß germanischer Frauen", in Baltrusch E. – Hegewisch M. – Meyer M. (eds.), *2000 Jahre Varusschlacht: Geschichte – Archäologie – Legenden* (Berlin: 2012) 71–94, here esp. 89–91, for an earlier view e.g. Bruder R., *Die germanische Frau im Lichte der Runeninschriften und der antiken Historiographie* (Berlin: 1974) 151–162.

<sup>5</sup> Tacitus, *Historiae*, ed. E. Koestermann (Leipzig: 1969), Liber IV, § 61, and Liber V, § 22, § 24.

a tower. She had her messages passed on via an interpreter, through a window, without speaking directly to her addressees. Her aura and her authority could only be enhanced by this seclusion.<sup>6</sup> When the nine legions of Gaius Mucius had crushed the Batavian rising, the fate of the Germanic seer was also sealed. What became of her is not reported by Tacitus, but Statius, in his *Silvae*, records that Veleda in AD 77 was brought in the triumph to Rome, where she lived on for some years.<sup>7</sup> Whether she spent these years in captivity or perhaps in freedom, whether she was a hostage or could have received asylum because the changed political situation in her homeland made a return to Germany impossible for her, as has been suggested, must remain pure speculation.

It was worthy of note even for Tacitus and his successors that Veleda was not the only figure of this kind among the Germans, but evidently held a role that might also be carried out by other women. In the *Germania*, in which Veleda is briefly mentioned by Tacitus as a seer, the historian names a second oracular woman who had borne the name Aurinia and who held a rank equal to that of Veleda. She must have pursued this activity in Germany during the campaigns of Drusus and Tiberius.<sup>8</sup> In Cassius Dio another remarkable passage could be found. During the reign of the Emperor Domitian, a third woman with prophetic gifts, named Ganna, so we are told, had travelled to Rome in the company of the chief of the Semnones, Masyus, and had there been received by the emperor. Ganna, Cassius Dio adds, had taken over the position of Veleda and was a virgin like her predecessor.<sup>9</sup> Each of these two women was, as Suidas records in his lexicon, a θειάζουσα, possessed by the divine.<sup>10</sup>

But who were these prophetesses and seers? Did they hold an institution-alised office? Why were they kept in isolation away from the people, as Tacitus had reported? Was that a precondition for their gift of prophecy? To what tradition did they belong? Was there perhaps a caste of women in central and northern Europe who had passed on their knowledge from generation to generation? The researchers of the twentieth century were not the first to have taken an interest in the Germanic prophetesses; they had already caught the attention of early modern scholars and inspired the fantasy of a generation of antiquaries of the seventeenth to eighteenth century that is today almost

6 Ibidem, Liber IV, § 65.

7 P. Papinius Statius, *Silvae*, ed. John Phillimore (Oxford: 1962), Liber I, 4, v. 89–91.

8 Tacitus, *Opera minora*, ed. M. Winterbottom – R.M. Ogilvie (Oxford: 1975), *Germania*, c. 8, § 2.

9 Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, ed. E. Cary, 9 vols. (London – Cambridge, MA: 1968), Liber LXIV, c. 5, Greek and English, vol. 8, 346–347.

10 Suidas, *Lexicon*, ed. A. Adler, 4 vols. (Leipzig: 1928–1938), s.v. θειάζουσα, Nr. 307, vol. 2, 713.

totally forgotten, though their echo was still traceable, if only implicitly, in the university culture of the following century. Unlike the study of the ancient world in the nineteenth century, which was already strongly dominated by archaeology, the principal discipline of researchers into antiquities in the preceding decades had been philology; it had operated in the realm of texts and drawn on artefacts only for additional explanations. Unlike their successors in the second half of the nineteenth century, they also, as we will see, had no fear of the grand construct, the large, explanatory narrative across eras, whose claims were what provided the justification for the individual *realia*.

### **Veleda, the Druidess in the Wilderness**

The history of exegesis of Veleda begins early. Already in the sixteenth century the first philologists had concerned themselves with the interpretation of her name. Conrad Gessner (1516–1565) explains 'Veleda' in his *Mithradates* as derived from *Weeshed*, or wisdom (German *Weisheit*); so Veleda must be understood as 'she who knows' (German *Wissende*).<sup>11</sup> Ole Worm, the great Danish antiquary of the early seventeenth century, who otherwise contributes little to the discussion, had a rather different etymology: he derives the name from the root 'to will'. Veleda was thus, so Worm believed, the gods' 'chosen one' (German *Erwählte*).<sup>12</sup> Somewhat different is the proposal made by Hadrian Junius (1511–1565) in his *Batavia*, his grand account of the Dutch-Belgian cultural sphere. Veleda, the *virgo fatidica*, bore a name that made a direct reference to her role as prophetess. It stood for *vel leed*, or 'much suffering'. All prophetic women, according to Junius, had only rarely had good news to announce. At some point their prophecies had reverted to the type of Cassandra, the archetype of female seers. Why would it have been any different with Veleda, the Germanic prophetess, who had, after all, likewise ended her career by being taken to Rome as a captive? Junius follows this up with a second proposal, which is concerned with Veleda's *solitudo*, which followed her as her decisive attribute. Perhaps her name could also be explained as *Vel-heid*, or 'much heath', 'much field', for she could only become a prophetess if she spent

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<sup>11</sup> Gessner Conrad, *Mithridates : De differentiis linguarum tum veterum, tum quae hodie apud diversas nationes in toto orbe terrarum in usu sunt* (Zürich, Froschauer: 1555), fols. 28v–29v.

<sup>12</sup> Worm Ole, *Runir seu Danica literatura antiquissima, vulgo Gothica dicta luci redditia* (Copenhagen, Martzan: 1651), on the Alrunae completely c. 3, 14–23.

time away from other people, out in the fields. It was this turn away from the world that was her determining aspect.<sup>13</sup>

Dutch scholars, following Junius, took the characteristics of Veleda and Aurinia that had been collected by Tacitus and in the mid-seventeenth century set them in a larger context; it was they, too, who for the first time made an attempt to define her distinctive status. Menso Alting the Younger (1541–1612), a direct descendant of the great Reformer from Groningen, treats the three Germanic prophetesses Veleda, Aurinia, and Ganna together. All three figures were prophetesses who, as Tacitus had reported, had become goddesses, and they must be explained as mother goddesses. Hence, so Alting's first proposal, they must be ranked alongside Nehalana, a highly debated figure in the Dutch pantheon, or the obscure goddess Tanfana. All three prophetesses bore 'true names' that refer to their prophetic gift. 'Aurinia' stood for *Al* and *runa*, or 'all art', 'art of all', for, as Alting was able to discover from his colleague Martin Boxhorn (1612–1653), *ruin* was a Celtic word for *ars*. Behind 'Ganna' lay hidden, so Alting believed, the word *Gaw*, a word for understanding. 'Veleda', finally, was explained simply in Dutch as *Veel-weet*, she who 'knows much'.<sup>14</sup>

These etymological reflections alone, in which a certain circularity cannot be denied, were admittedly not enough to pin down the prophetic women of the ancient Germans. The task of assigning Veleda to a specific type of seer would be undertaken, at around the same time by another scholar, Johannes Saubert. This theologian from Helmstedt in 1659 published a compilation of material on sacrificial practices in the ancient world, which also had a place specially for Veleda. For the first time, she here appears within a systematic context. There had always been priestesses, according to Saubert, who as women had headed particular cults. Diana was worshipped by virgins, and the Bona Dea too, the Syrian goddess in Rome, had been assigned her own, exclusively female priesthoods. Livy knew of priestesses who took part in the cult of Bacchus, and the Vestals, the best known female members of the Roman religious personnel, also had to be virgins. Why shouldn't the Celts and Germans, Saubert asked, likewise have practised comparable cults?<sup>15</sup> The *Historia*

<sup>13</sup> Junius Hadrianus, *Batavia, in qua praeter gentis et insulae antiquitatem, originem, decora, mores, aliaque ad eam historiam pertinentia, declaratur quae fuerit vetus Batavia, quae Plinio, Tacito, et Ptolemaeo cognita, quae item genuina inlytae Francorum nationis fuerit sedes* (Leiden, Raphelengius: 1588), *Historia*, 410.

<sup>14</sup> Alting Menso, *Descriptio secundum antiquos Agri Batavi et Frisi sive Notitia Germaniae inferioris* (Amsterdam, Wettstenius: 1697), Pars I, 102–103.

<sup>15</sup> Saubert Johann, *De Sacrificiis veterum conlectanea historico-philologica, et miscella critica* (Jena, Matthaeus Birckner: 1659), c. 7, 172–179.

*Augusta* knew of druidesses—*druidissae*—who had foretold the future to emperors spending time in Gaul and Germany. Veleda, Aurinia, and Ganna, too, according to Saubert, must have been druidesses like this, who could be ranked alongside the other female priestly castes of the Mediterranean world.<sup>16</sup> Two ancient authorities helped, Saubert believed, to define their position more precisely. Jordanes had described in his *Gothic History* how the Goths, when they had left Sweden, had slowly migrated south under their king Filimer. In their train there was a contingent of magically gifted women, the *haliorunnae*, according to Jordanes, or *Alraunen*, who, by command of the ruler, had been left behind in the wilderness because they were so dangerous.<sup>17</sup> To these *Alraunen*, ur-Germanic female magicians with a fondness for occult practices, one should also assign Tacitus's similar-sounding Aurinia and her companions. Her name was a generic designation, as Jordanes showed.<sup>18</sup> Already in the sixteenth century Johannes Aventinus in his *Bavarian Annals* had been able to give further meaning to the account in the *Gothic History*, though his direct sources are unclear. The *Alraunen* had been the female priestly caste of the ancient Germans, and above all of the Cimbri. Draped in white linen garments held by bronze clasps, barefoot and with long, white, unbound hair, these women, according to Aventinus, had attended the execution of captives in whose blood, which they had had drained into a bowl, they had read the future. Other members of the group had used the entrails of the dead to search for signs of a possible victory.<sup>19</sup> Had Veleda hence been a witch living in the wilderness, committed to ancient sacrificial cults—the extispicy described above—comparable to the notorious Thessalian witches in Lucan?<sup>20</sup> Her name at least, as Saubert too stresses, reveals her close link to the wilderness and renunciation of every aspect of human civilisation. 'Veleda' meant the same as *valdheide*, or 'wooded heath', and so stood for the fields, the 'wild', and also the fertility that was linked to it.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Ibidem, c. 7, 179–181, and see *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, ed. E. Hohl, 2 vols. (Leipzig: 1955), Flavius Vopiscus, Aurelian, c. 14, § 2, c. 44, §§ 3–5, Aelius Lampridius, c. 60, §§ 5–6.

<sup>17</sup> Jordanes, *Romana et Getica*, ed. T. Mommsen (Berlin: 1882), Getica, xxiv, § 121, 89.

<sup>18</sup> Saubert, *De Sacrificiis veterum conlectanea*, c. 7, 183–184.

<sup>19</sup> See as one of the many early modern printed versions Aventinus Johannes, *Annalium Boiorum libri VII* (Frankfurt, Ludovicus Regius: 1627), Liber I, 15–16.

<sup>20</sup> Saubert, *De Sacrificiis veterum conlectanea*, c. 7, 181–183. See Lucan, *De bello civili*, ed. D.R. Shackleton Bailey (Stuttgart: 1997), Liber VI, v. 438–830.

<sup>21</sup> Saubert, *De Sacrificiis veterum conlectanea*, c. 7, 184–185.

### The Nordic Prophetess

With Saubert's attempt to link the theme to late antique textual records it was a short step for later antiquaries to involve the Germanic prophetesses in a larger narrative about the history of religion. Roughly at the same time as Saubert, the Wittenberg polymath Georg Kaspar Kirchmaier (1635–1700) reached similar results to those of his colleague in Helmstedt. For not least, he insists, he had seen with his own eyes the 'gypsy women' of his hometown, who, he believed, seemed even now to be pursuing similar magical practices.<sup>22</sup> In 1720 Johann Georg Keysler published his *Antiquitates septentrionales*, a foundational work in the study of German, and especially North German, antiquities.<sup>23</sup> Unlike his predecessors, Keysler, an independent scholar in Lauenburg, made generous use of new source material. In the meantime Swedish and Danish scholars, Thomas Bartholin (1659–1690), Peder Resenius (1625–1688), Olaus Verelius (1618–1682), and Thormond Torfaeus (1636–1719), had translated the first records of the Icelandic saga literature from Old Norse and had also made available the *Edda* and the works of Snorri Sturluson,<sup>24</sup> above all the *Heimskringla*.<sup>25</sup> Texts like the *Hervarar saga*, the *Völsunga saga* or the *Saga of Rolf Krake* were now accessible to a Latin-reading public. In addition there were authors such as Saxo Grammaticus with his *History of the Danes* that had now been evaluated thoroughly by scholars like Stephan Stephanius (1599–1650) for the first time.<sup>26</sup> Above all the Dane Bartholin, the son, who died young, of the Copenhagen medic and polymath of the same name, had in his *Antiquitates*

<sup>22</sup> Kirchmaier Georg, *In C.C. Tacitum De Germania liber commentarius* (Wittenberg, Haken: 1664), c. 8, 144.

<sup>23</sup> Keysler Johann Georg, *Antiquitates selectae et celticae* (Hannover, Förster: 1720), *Dissertatio de mulieribus fatidicis* 369–510. A few years earlier Keysler published a study on the Dutch goddess Nehalennia, see Keysler Johann Georg, *Exercitatio historico-philologica de Dea Nehalennia, numine veterum Walachorum topico* (Celle, Hoffmann: 1717).

<sup>24</sup> On the making and the content of Resenius's edition of the *Edda* see Faulkes A., in *Edda Islandorum – Völsuspá – Hávamál*, ed. Pedar Resenius (Copenhagen, Gödenius: 1665 [reprint Reykjavík: 1977]) 9–95. The edition included as separate titles: *Edda Islandorum an. Chr. MCCXV islandice conscripta per Snorronem Sturlae Islanidae nomophylacem* (Copenhagen: 1665); *Philosophia antiquissima norvego-danica dicta Wöluspa quae est pars Eddae Saemundi* (Copenhagen: 1665); and *Ethica Odini pars Eddae Saemundi vocata Haavamaal una cum apendice appellato Runa Capitule* (Copenhagen: 1665).

<sup>25</sup> Snorre Sturlesøns, *Norske Kongers Chronica*, trans. Peder Claussøn (Copenhagen, Moltke: 1633).

<sup>26</sup> See as contemporary edition Saxo Grammaticus, *Historiae Danicae libri XVI*, ed. Stephan Hansen Stephanius (Sorøe, Moltke: 1644).

*danicae* already in 1689 intensively engaged with Old Norse magic, magical runes and the role of occult sciences in Iceland, and had been able to back up their significance with numerous excerpts from the saga literature, which he himself had translated into Latin, the massive manuscript collection of Árni Magnússon (1663–1730) in the Royal Library being available for Bartholin to draw upon.<sup>27</sup> Keysler's concern was to make these textual records productive for ancient Germanic history and to make connections from them back to Latin historiography. Additionally, archaeological finds were also taken into account for the first time, above all the Latin inscriptions, which Johann Gruter and after him Jacob Spon and others in the Germanic and Celtic area had been collecting since the beginning of the seventeenth century.<sup>28</sup>

Veleda must have been more than just an influential seer who was by chance attested in Latin historiography. Veleda, Aurinia, and Ganna should be assessed in the context of an ancient tradition that had included both Celts and Germans. They were part of an institution that reached from Hellenic antiquity right into the Middle Ages. The ancient Roman world, Keysler begins, had known the *matronae*, the *matres*, mother goddesses who were to be found on a large number of votive inscriptions throughout the whole of the Romanised Celtic and German area of central Europe.<sup>29</sup> For the most part attached to particular regions through their cognomina, these *matres*, Keysler believed, had been women who had been honoured and deified already in the ancient world on account of their special abilities.<sup>30</sup> In Nijmegen there was a stone dedicated to a *matrona Aufania*. *Au* stood for 'field' and *fan* was an Old German word for 'lord, master'. Was this not thus the worship of the 'Mistress of the Field', a figure flickering between nature goddess and druidess?<sup>31</sup> These women's natural place was far from civilisation, Keysler stresses, in isolation away from the

<sup>27</sup> Bartholin Thomas, *Antiquitatum Danicarum de causis contemptae a Danis adhuc gentiliibus mortis libri tres* (Copenhagen, Bockenhoffer: 1689).

<sup>28</sup> Keysler mainly used Gruter Jan, *Inscriptiones antiquae totius orbis Romani, in corpus absolutissimum redactae*, 2 vols. (Heidelberg, Commelin: 1602–1603), and Spon Jacob, *Recherche des Antiquités et Curiosités de la Ville de Lyon, ancienne Colonie des Romains et Capitale de la Gaule Celtique* (Lyon, Cellier: 1675).

<sup>29</sup> For a good survey on the *matronae* and their epithet see the papers of Schauerte G., "Darstellungen mütterlicher Gottheiten in den römischen Nordwestprovinzen", in Petrikovits H. von (ed.), *Matronen und verwandte Gottheiten* (Cologne: 1987) 55–102; Neumann G., "Die germanischen Matronen-Beinamen" in ibidem 103–132, and Schmidt K.H., "Die keltischen Matronennamen", in ibidem 133–154.

<sup>30</sup> Keysler, *Antiquitates selectae*, §§ 5–50, 377–444.

<sup>31</sup> Ibidem, §§ 39–40, 425–430, and see Smetius Johannes, *Antiquitates Neomagenses sive Notitia rarissimarum rerum antiquarum, in qua annuli, gemmae, amuleta, claves, styli,*

cities. Strabo and with him Dionysius Periegetes, and Pomponius Mela had told of an island off the coast of Brittany, the Île de Sein, on which an association of women had resided, which was devoted exclusively to sacrificial rites and prophesying. These priestesses too spent their lives in the solitude of the island without spatial contact to the outside world; they were not permitted to associate with men, as Mela reports, and when they fell into ecstasies they were questioned in strict seclusion. By day they opened the roof of their sanctuary so that they had direct access to the open sky from there, and by night the roof was put back on.<sup>32</sup> Isaak Vossius in his commentary on Pomponius Mela had still been unsure how to assess these women, called the *Barrigenae*. According to Mela they were able to heal both humans and animals through their skills, could call up storms with their spells and could even turn themselves into animals.<sup>33</sup> Already Johannes Vadian had established in his Mela commentary that the characteristics of these priestesses must also apply to Veleda and her sisters.<sup>34</sup> Tacitus, in turn, had spoken in his *Annales* of a group of druidesses who resided on the island of Mona in the Atlantic and were able to prophesy from the entrails of their victims.<sup>35</sup> These holy women too must, like the druidesses off the Breton coast, have been some of the 'mothers' who apparently had held the office of prophetess throughout the whole Germano-Celtic area.<sup>36</sup>

Step by step a picture began to become visible of a caste of wonderworking druidesses, which from time immemorial had been set apart from the ordinary people and entrusted with the transmission of occult knowledge. The panorama of the prophetesses could be massively expanded, so Keysler believed, if one were prepared to take a look at the newly available Scandinavian literature.<sup>37</sup> Thomas Bartholin in his *Antiquitates danicae* had drawn attention to the figure of the *volva*, the 'prophetess', who appears in many sagas. The

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*tintinnabula, fibulae, lampades atque alia antiquorum monumenta explicantur et varia Romanorum numismata hactenus non visa illustrantur* (Nijmegen, Smetius: 1678) 91.

<sup>32</sup> Strabo, *The Geography*, ed. H.L. Jones – Sitlington Sterret J.R., 8 vols (London – Cambridge, MA: 1960–1970), Liber IV, c. 4, § 6, Greek and English, vol. 2, 248–251; Pomponius Mela, *Chorographie*, ed. A. Silberman (Paris: 1988), Liber III, c. 6, § 48, 81; Dionysios Periegetes, *Das Lied von der Welt*, ed. and trans. K. Brodersen (Hildesheim: 1994) V. 565–575, 78–79.

<sup>33</sup> Vossius Isaac, *Observationes ad Pomponium Melam de situ orbis* (The Hague, Vlacq: 1658), Liber III, c. 6, 252–253.

<sup>34</sup> Vadian Johannes, *Pomponius Mela de orbis situ libri tres* (Paris, Christian Wechel: 1540), Liber III, c. 6, 169.

<sup>35</sup> Cornelius Tacitus, *Annalium ab excessu divi Augusti libri*, ed. C.D. Fisher (Oxford: 1959), Liber XIV, 29.

<sup>36</sup> Keysler, *Antiquitates selectae*, § 55, 450–456.

<sup>37</sup> Ibidem, § 54, 450.

*Nornagestz saga* had described the habits of these women. The *volva* wandered around in the fields far from other people, and only in order to deliver prophecies were they allowed into human habitations, which they as a rule left again bearing rich gifts. At the cradle of the hero of the *Nornagestz saga* three prophetesses had foretold great victories and a successful life so long as the candle that had been pressed into the hand of the warrior-to-be's mother did not burn out; later, the hero himself would light the candle after his baptism.<sup>38</sup> Women like Finna, who were *seidkona*, 'skilled in magic', had, also in the *Vatnsdaela saga*, been able to foretell in detail the future of the new settlers in Iceland. Their questioners had allowed the seer into their house, where, richly adorned, she had sat on a throne, set above and apart from the others present; she in turn had demanded unqualified acceptance of her prophecies, all of which would come true in every detail. One of the strangest figures was found in the *Saga of Erik the Red*, the explorer of Greenland, namely a *vola*, a prophetess by the name of Thorbjörg who must have lived in the tenth century AD. When in winter there was famine, the prophetess was called from her hermitage and asked to assess the future of the community. Swathed in a blue cloak and a lambskin, with gloves of cat's fur and a chain of glass heads, and armed with a long staff and with some other instruments slung about her, she entered the house of the leader Thorkil, where she was entertained to the best of his ability. The assembled people succeed in finding another woman, who had already become a Christian but who still knew the old pagan hymns, to work alongside Thorbjörg, and together they conjure the gods, who show themselves to be merciful. After intensive questioning it becomes clear that the famine will come to an end. Thorbjörg, further, foretells for her Christian adjutant a happy marriage, a large family, and a return to Iceland. Everything would turn out as the seer had foretold.<sup>39</sup> Keysler was able to add further comparable events that can be found in Snorri's *Heimskringla* or in Saxo Grammaticus's *History of the Danes*. The goddess Sif in the *Edda* must also have been just such an Old Norse prophetess.<sup>40</sup> The activity of the seers was articulated in the name of the *Alraune*, Keysler stresses, the Aurinia of Tacitus and Jordanes. They had been 'Mistresses of the Runes', who murmur (German *raunen*) magic spells. For Keysler it was thus established that the chain of druidesses and prophetesses,

<sup>38</sup> On the well known Norns in Saga-literature see e.g. Ström F., *Diser, Nornor, Vakyror: Fruktbarhetskult och sakralt kungadöme i Norden* (Stockholm: 1954) 80–95.

<sup>39</sup> Bartholin, *Antiquitatum Danicarum libri tres*, Liber III, c. 4, 684–693.

<sup>40</sup> Keysler, *Antiquitates selectae*, § 53, 448–449, § 57, 461–470, and see e.g. Saxo Grammaticus, ed. A. Holder (Straßburg: 1886), Liber VIII, 281, on the prophetess Guthruna, and Snorre Sturlesøns, *Norske Kongers Chronica*, on the prophetess Ragnhild, 36–37.

the mistresses of forest and field, had never been broken from antiquity into the Norse Middle Ages, and that its continuity could be traced long into the recent past. Veleda had been just one prominent figure among many.<sup>41</sup>

### The Prophetess on the Banks of the Lippe

Many antiquaries of the following period adopted Keysler's reconstruction, among them Christoph Dommerich (1723–1767) from Wolfenbüttel, who as late as 1748 devoted a whole treatise to Veleda, even though he cited little more than his colleague from Lauenburg had done.<sup>42</sup> New light was cast on the figure of the Germanic prophetess, whose nature permitted ever new attributes to be teased out, by another colleague of Keysler, Gottfried Schütze (1719–1784) from Hamburg.<sup>43</sup> Schütze was one of the key figures in studies of the ancient world in the early eighteenth century, whose erudition was almost unlimited but who at the same time were not afraid, as we have seen, of grand constructions of tradition. Who was this prophetess of Tacitus, cowering alone in her tower? Schütze was familiar with the numerous etymologies and also the long genealogy that Keysler had written for the Germanic *prophetissa*. For him there was no reason to doubt them.<sup>44</sup> However, Keysler had contributed little, Schütze believed, to localising Veleda in reality. In which region had the Bructeri sought her out, when the seer had stubbornly withdrawn from her audience? Was her homeland, as had been suspected, perhaps in one of the loneliest and most desolate regions in the whole Dutch-German area, the Emsland, or, more expansively, the area between the Ijssel and Ems rivers, as had been supposed? Had her tower perhaps stood directly on the river Lippe? Schütze is able to discuss a series of possible hypotheses. The Westphalian scholar of antiquities Jodocus Hermann Nünningh (1675–1753) had a few years previously even gone

41 Keysler, *Antiquitates selectae*, §§ 58–63, 470–484.

42 Dommerich Johann Christoph, *De Aurinia et Veleda, feminis Germanorum fatidicis, ad Taciti Germ. c. VIII. Exercitatio* (Wolfenbüttel, Bindseil: 1756), see there esp. 6–12. See in addition as earlier treatments e.g. Reimann Jacob Friedrich, *Versuch einer Einleitung in die Historiam literariam derer Teutschen I. und II. Theil* (Halle, Renger: 1713), II. Theil, §§ 86–89, 98–99, and Hachenberg Paul, *Germania Media publicis dissertationibus Acad. Heidelbergensi proposita, in qua res mediorum seculorum, quae a Trajano ad Maximilianum I. fluxere, ex priscis Autoribus recensentur, mores, ritus, leges sacrae profanaeque, ceremoniae illustrantur* (Halle, Renger: 1709), Dissertatio VIII, § 22, 196–197.

43 Schütze Gottfried, *Exercitationum ad Germaniam sacram gentilem facientium sylloge* (Leipzig, Langenhein: 1748), Exercitatio II, 23–64.

44 Ibidem, Exercitatio II, §§ 4–5, 26–29.

a step further. Veleda's grave could be located precisely: it was to be placed, Nünningh believed, in a group of megaliths in the vicinity of the Westphalian villages Vehlen and Heiden, which had together preserved the name of the seer. Even in his own day the local populace called this grave formation, like so many others, as Nünningh had discovered, by the name *Düwelsteen*, the 'Devil's Stone'. Schütze remained sceptical about such precise findings.<sup>45</sup>

More important were the attributes that had been ascribed to the group of prophetesses taken as a whole. Their abilities must have approximated them to the witches and would have had the effect that scholars of earlier generations, such as Johan Picard (1600–1670), had regarded them too as devilish creatures. Certainly they had performed human sacrifice, Schütze emphasises, and certainly Veleda too had, like the druidesses on Mona, sacrificed captives in order to make predictions from their gushing blood and their entrails; perhaps even the Roman officer Lupercius, who according to Tacitus was to have been handed over to Veleda, had been intended for such an extispicy.<sup>46</sup> For Schütze too it is her *solitudo*, her seclusion, that seemed to give the seer a significant part of her power. The druidesses of the Île de Sein and their companions on Mona in the Irish Sea, the *Alraunen* of Jordanes and Veleda had all been entirely withdrawn from their surroundings. In Heidelberg the humanists had known of the ancient prophetess Jetta, a figure who must have seemed like an analogy to Veleda. She too had lived shut up in a tower on a hill near the Neckar and never entered into direct contact with her audience. Only through a window in

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45 Ibidem, *Exercitatio* II, §§ 6–7, 29–36, and see Nünningh Jodocus Hermann, *Sepulcretum Westphalico-Mimigardico-Gentile duabus sectionibus partitum, in quarum prima de urnis, in altera de lapidibus Ethnicorum sepulcralibus disseritur* (Frankfurt, Führmann: 1714), Sectio II, c. 1, 54–56, and in addition Spener Jacob Karl, *Notitia Germaniae antiquae ab ortu Reipublicae ad Regnorum Germanicorum in Romanis Provinciis stabilimenta* (Halle, Du Serre: 1717), Liber IV, c. 3, § 32, 247–249, and Teschenmacher Werner, *Annales Cliviae, Juliae, Montium, Ravensbergae, Geldriae et Zutphaniae, quos denuo cum annotationes, tabulis geographicis, genealogicis illustrantur* (Frankfurt, Nicolai: 1721), Pars I, 11–12.

46 Schütze, *Exercitationum ad Germaniam sacram gentilem facientium sylloge*, *Exercitatio* II, §§ 11–14, 41–45, and see for Schütze Picardt Johan, *Korte beschryvinge van eenige vergetene en verborgene Antiquiteiten der Provintien en Landen gelegen tusschen de Noord-Zee, de Yssel, Emse en Lippe* (Amsterdam, Goesdesbergh: 1660) 1. Deel, dist. 16, 66, and in opposite Slichtenhorst Arnd, *XIV. Boeken van de Geldersse Geschiedenissen, van 't begin af vervolghd tot aen de afzweeringh des Konincx van Spanien, waer van 't eerste Deel verhandeld de Land-beschrijvingh* (Arnhem, van Biesen: 1654), Pars I, who already calls her an 'aristocratic princess', 7.

her residence was this prophetess from time to time permitted to make herself visible.<sup>47</sup>

The Hamburg prehistorian Schütze, who also in other works had passionately boasted of the positive aspects of the ancient Germans, also in the case of Veleda and her colleagues wants to see the good qualities of the ancient seers given their due.<sup>48</sup> These women, Schütze insists, were for the most part skilled in healing and experienced in medicine, they were schooled in the influences of the heavens and were able to cast horoscopes. The often rather dull and unsophisticated German men, who were wholly occupied with the craft of war, had lacked these abilities. These warriors must have thus been all the more amazed and awestruck by the gifts of their womenfolk. It was hence no wonder that these women must at some point have acquired a divine nature in the eyes of those around them.<sup>49</sup> A final transformation had then come over the Germanic seer, Schütze believed, in more recent popular folk belief. In many regions of Germany, as already Leibniz had suspected, they had been given the name Frau Fauke, Frau Harke, Frau Holde, and, above all, it was supposed, Frau Holle, made famous by Grimm's fairy tales. Fertility goddess and prophetess had been melded into a single figure, Schütze stresses, whom the ordinary people, in Thuringia or the Mark Brandenburg, had continued to revere even into the recent past.<sup>50</sup>

### The Prophetess and the Mandrake

With Schütze too, the search for the Germanic prophetess in the mid-eighteenth century thus ended in a great continuity of wise women, whose chain of transmission was able to span the epochs. A wholly different but no

47 Schütze, *Exercitationum ad Germaniam sacram gentilem facientium sylloge*, Exercitatio II, §§ 16–17, 47–51, and see on the figure of Jetta Leodius Hubertus Thomas, *De antiquitatibus Heidelbergae*, as Appendix in Freher Marquard, *Originum Palatinarum commentarius, de gentis et dignitatis eius primordiis* (Heidelberg, Christoph Löw und Johann Lancelot: 1599) 24.

48 See e.g. Schütze Gottfried, *Lobschrift auf die Weiber der alten deutschen und nordischen Völker* (Hamburg, Herold: 1776), there esp. § 4, 16–27.

49 Schütze, *Exercitationum ad Germaniam sacram gentilem facientium sylloge*, Exercitatio II, § 15, 45–47.

50 Ibidem, Exercitatio II, § 24, 62–64, and see for Schütze Leibniz Gottfried Wilhelm, *Collectanea etymologica, illustrationi linguarum, veteris Celticae, Germanicae, Gallicaem, altiarumque inservientia*, ed. Johann Georg Eckhardt, 2 vols. (Hannover, Förster: 1717), vol. 2, 9.

less interesting aspect was added to the early modern antiquarian history of interpretation of the German prophetesses by another scholar of antiquity, Gottfried Christian Roth (1708–1774), who had taught in Helmstedt. Roth too had read Keysler's history of the druidesses and had no objections to make to it.<sup>51</sup> However, their tradition could be pursued further, as Roth aimed to demonstrate in 1737. Already Keysler had referred to the fact that the Aurinia and Alruna mentioned by Jordanes and Tacitus had a striking similarity to another creature, namely the well known *Alraune*, the mandrake or *mandragora*, a plant with human-shaped root-tubers. Its significance for magic and occult medicine could hardly be overstated in late antiquity and the Middle Ages. The relevant encyclopaedias—Bartholomaeus Anglicus or Vincent of Beauvais, but also already Dioscurides—had taken over-generous account of the applications of this root.<sup>52</sup> Since the seventeenth century there had, further, been a debate on whether the obscure Hebrew *dodaim*, which in Scripture Rachel had once received as medicine from her sister Leah in order to increase her fertility, might not in reality have been mandrakes.<sup>53</sup> At the same time, the history of the root itself and its elevation in cult had been treated in several treatises, not least by well known medics such as Anton Deusing (1612–1666) in Groningen or historians such as Jacob Thomasius (1622–1684), who had devoted large compilations of material to the topic.<sup>54</sup>

But how did these botanical *Alraunen* relate to the prophetesses, the Alrunae of the Germanic traditions? Gottfried Roth had a remarkable theory. The aura and attributes of the prophetesses had been transferred to the roots;

<sup>51</sup> Roth Gottfried Christian, *De imagunculis Germanorum magicis, quas Abrunas vocant, commentatio historico-antiquaria* (Helmstedt, Weygandt: 1737), c. 2, § 3, 19–21.

<sup>52</sup> Vincenz of Beauvais, *Speculum naturale* (Douai, Bellerus: 1624 [reprint Graz: 1964]), Liber IX, c. 97–98, col. 623–624; Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *De proprietatibus rerum: Volume VI*, ed. I. Ventura (Turnhout: 2007), Liber XVII, c. 104, 150–152.

<sup>53</sup> For possible suggestions see Rudbeck the Younger Olaus, *Dudaim Rubenis, quos neuti-quam Mandragorae fructus fuisse, aut flores amabiles, sed fraga vel mora rubi Idaei spinosi, allatae hic rationes satis videntur, evincere* (Uppsala, Werner: 1733), there esp. 15–18, or Ludolf Hiob, *Ad suam Historiam Aethiopicam antehac editam Commentarius, in quo multa breviter dicta fusius narrantur, contraria refelluntur* (Frankfurt, Zunner: 1691), Liber I, c. 9, 139–144.

<sup>54</sup> As examples see Deusing Anton, *Dissertatio de mandragorae pomis, pro Dudaim Genes. 30 habitis illiusque mangoniis, vulgo dictis Pisse-Dieffes* (Groningen, Cöllen: 1659), passim; Liebentantz Michael – Liebentantz Johann (resp.), *Exercitatio philologica de Rachelis deliciis Dudaim, ad Genes. 30, 14* (Wittenberg, Schrödter: 1665), passim; Thomasius Jacob – Schmiedel Johann (resp.), *De mandragora disputatio philologica* (Leipzig, Georgius: 1671), there esp. c. 1, §§ 8–14, fols. A4r–Br.

the mandrake was a cult image of the divinised seer. Roth brought two large strands of tradition together. Already Jewish folk belief, as reported by Flavius Josephus, had known of roots in human form that were ritually smeared with blood or urine, and comparable ritual objects were also, Roth continued, not unknown among the Greeks and Romans either.<sup>55</sup> At the same time, it was known also that the ancient Germans had from time immemorial made use of small, talisman-like cult images, Germanic *lares* or *penates*, which were made out of bone, wood, or whale tusks and which served as votive objects. Had not St. Gallus, as could be discovered from the *Life* of this saint, destroyed a hoard of such cult objects and, even in the Carolingian period, had the half-Christianised populace of France not carried these objects over the fields to conciliate the old gods? Were comparable cult symbols not expressly condemned as dangerous superstition by the first synods of the Merovingian and Carolingian period?<sup>56</sup> Roth sums up one more time the history of the Germanic prophetesses, which necessarily ran from Veleda, to the *Alraunen* of the wilderness at the beginning of the period of late antique migrations, through the druidesses off Brittany, the Mothers on the Romano-German gravestones, and on to the *volva* of Icelandic literature. The first anthropomorphic mandrake figures, as Roth claims to know, had been offered to these women as a prestigious cult object already in early times. Over the centuries, they had then gradually taken over their functions too.<sup>57</sup>

Roth believed he could demonstrate just how closely the two phenomena tracked each other. The prophetesses healed illnesses through their spells, *incantationes*; the same was achieved by the mandrake. The prophetess, as could be discovered from Saxo Grammaticus, was able by her intercession to ensure riches; no less than this was guaranteed also by the mandrake root. The mandrake was deployed in love magic, an ability in which the Icelandic prophetesses too had especially distinguished themselves. The roots served as an instrument of divination, just as the *Alraune* Veleda had foretold the future to the rebelling Batavians.<sup>58</sup> Finally, the human-like plant could also be deployed

55 Roth, *De imagunculis Germanorum magicis*, c. 2, §§ 1–2, 13–19, and see Flavius Josephus, *The Jewish War*, ed. H. St. J. Thackeray, 3 vols. (London – Cambridge, MA: 1957), Liber VII, § 180, Greek and English, vol. 3, 556–557.

56 Roth, *De imagunculis Germanorum magicis*, c. 2, §§ 4–5, 21–27, and see Walafrid Strabo, *Vita St. Galli*, in *Passiones vitaeque sanctorum aevi Merovingici*, ed. B. Krusch (Hannover: 1902) 280–337, here c. 4, 287–288, and the *Indiculus superstitionum*, in *Capitularia regum Francorum* (MGH, Leges, vol. 1), ed. G. H. Pertz (Hannover: 1835) 19–20, there 20.

57 Roth, *De imagunculis Germanorum magicis*, c. 2, §§ 7–8, 30–34.

58 Ibidem, c. 2, §§ 10–14, 40–50, and see on a lovespell of queen Götware Saxo Grammaticus, *Historia*, Liber V, 123–124, and in addition a lovespell for King Bodvar in the contemporary

in conjuring the dead. And precisely this gift, Roth insists, was one of the principal duties of the Nordic prophetesses too. Bartholin had shown in detail how the *volva* Thorgerd had succeeded in giving life to a life-sized figure that she had carved from wood, with a human heart and a spirit of the dead. Like a golem this creature had then, as is recounted in the *Saga of Thorleif Jaraskalld*, gone into battle on behalf of King Haquin in order to kill his opponents in his absence. All the supernatural abilities of the old prophetesses had at some point been projected onto the root of the same name.<sup>59</sup>

Roth's wilful linkage of the Germanic prophetess and the mandrake root had also borne in mind the exclusivity and isolation of both figures and so was able to weigh them up against each other. The seers, being close to nature like the roots, were only to be found in the fields and in the solitude of the forest; and the mandrake roots, as was well known, could only be recovered at certain times of day and even let out a human cry when they were pulled from the ground. Both alike thus owed their numinous nature to their *solitudo*. The speculations of the Helmstedt scholar may seem arbitrary, but they most certainly found support in German antiquarian circles. Just two years after the treatise's publication, Roth's colleague in Halle, Johann Samuel Schmid (1722–1787), published a *Commentatio* that summarised all aspects of the study one more time. For Schmid too of central importance is the long chain of women with divinatory gifts. Right to the end, so Schmid, Veleda, Aurinia, and Ganna had had a direct counterpart not only in the Celtic druidesses who were attested before them; the ancient Vestals, too, and the priestesses of Dionysus were part of their history. But the chain reached back even further into the past. The prophetesses in Scripture, too, such as Deborah, Miriam, or Huldah, and the famous witch of Endor who had once conjured the dead for King Saul, had been their direct predecessors.<sup>60</sup>

### The Sibyls of All Ages

From Roth's chain of tradition, reaching back into the biblical era, into which Veleda, too, could be incorporated, it was only a small step to the grand theory,

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edition of the "Hrolf Krake saga" Thormod Torfaeus, *Historia Hrolfi Krakii, inter potentissimos in Ethnicismo Daniae Reges celeberrimi* (Copenhagen, Paulli: 1715), c. 16, 99–101.

59 Roth, *De imagunculis Germanorum magicis*, c. 2, §§ 14–15, 50–53, and see Bartholin, *Antiquitatum Danicarum*, Liber III, c. 2, 628–630.

60 Schmid Johann Samuel, *Commentatio epistolica de Alrunis Germanorum, missa ad G.C. Rothum* (Halle, C.L. Sympfer: 1739), see there Observatio III, 37–64.

an esoteric explanation of the world, so to speak, with which I wish to conclude. Could Veleda not have been part of a chain of transmission and primeval tradition that reached back to the very first revelation? At least one eccentric antiquary of the mid-eighteenth century had tried to argue for this thesis, though admittedly against the background of a highly idiosyncratic vision of the world. Linked to it was a possible answer to the question of the doctrine that the prophetesses might have transmitted. Already the first Latin translator of the *Edda*, Peder Resenius, had claimed that the seer who in this work utters the *Völuspá*, the great creation song of the poetic *Edda*, was a Germanic sibyl.<sup>61</sup> The Old Norse word *Völuspá* had meant none other than 'song of the prophetess'.<sup>62</sup> For the Swedish national mythologies, admittedly, the *Edda*, and especially these first strophes of the poetic *Edda*—with their history of the origin of the world, the Cosmic Ash-tree, the creator god Odin, and the race of the Aesir, Loki and the death of Baldur, through to the Ragnarök, the cosmic conflagration—meant far more than just a medieval textual source that had been recorded in the famous *Codex regius* in Iceland. From this point of view, the doctrines of the *Edda* were a Christian-Germanic primeval revelation which was ranked almost as highly as the Bible and had been handed down from generation to generation from the time of Noah. It was the Nordic prophecy *par excellence*; its principal concepts, namely the decisive role of Odin, the battle of Thor with the Midgard Snake, or the descent of Odin into the Underworld, therefore, it was claimed, had also been passed on as doctrines by the Old Norse prophetesses in the alliterative verse of the poetic *Edda*.

Sweden's first translator of the *Edda*, Johan Göransson, who in 1746 had translated into Latin first the prose *Edda* and then also the *Völuspá*, was one of the most passionate defenders of this universalising claim about the primeval Nordic tradition.<sup>63</sup> Alongside his *Edda* translation, he in 1747 added a further treatise with the Swedish title *Is Atlinga*, which put at its centre the chain of

61 Resenius, *Philosophia antiquissima norvego-danica dicta Wöluspa*, fol. D2r, and in addition Resenius Peder – Guðmundur Andrésson, *Philosophia antiquissima norvego-danica dicta Wöluspa alias Edda Saemundi, ex bibliotheca Petri Joh. Resenii* (Copenhagen, Gödenius: 1673), Praefatio, fol. Brf.

62 For possible relations between the *Völuspá* and the Sibyls see Dronke U., "Völuspá and sibylline traditions", in North R. – Hofstra T., *Latin Culture and Medieval Germanic Europe* (Groningen: 1992) 3–24.

63 Göransson Johan, *De Yfverborna Atlingars, eller, Sviogötars ok Nordmänners, Edda: Hyperboreorum Atlantiorum, seu Suigotorum et Nordmannorum Edda* (Uppsala, Hecht: 1746), and idem, *De Yfverborna Atlingars eller Sviogöthars ok Nordmänners Patriarkaliska Lära, eller sådan hon var före Odhin II:s tid af Sämund hin Frode på Island, efter gamla Runoböcker År Chr. 1090 afskrefven* (Stockholm, Salvius: 1750).

prophetesses responsible for transmitting the *Edda*.<sup>64</sup> As with his predecessors, it is a history of secret prophecy that was supposed to reach from the biblical era of the Patriarchs down to medieval Iceland, a chain of sibyls that ran from the earliest days of humanity through to the druidesses of antiquity and must also have included the known Nordic prophetesses Veleda and Alruna. The true, primeval image of the sibyl, indeed her direct historical model, Göransson claimed, was the consort of Thor, the golden haired Sif, whom already Snorri had addressed as *Sibylla*. As *Vola*, Göransson stresses, she had been responsible for the *Völuspá*, as Rhea and the consort of Saturn she also corresponded to Cybele and, as 'Kabbalah' that had taken personal form, as Göransson does not hesitate to claim, she was guarantor of the primeval tradition that was passed on from generation to generation.<sup>65</sup> Almost all known mother goddesses could be inscribed in this tradition too. From the initial *Völuspá* a direct line must run via Orpheus, whom Göransson dates to around 1250 BC, to the numerous sibylline texts of the ancient tradition; like the *Acrosticha* that Augustine cites in the *City of God*, the *Völuspá* too, with its prospect of a reconstituted human race after the cosmic conflagration, delivered a prophecy of Christ that announced the Saviour and Son of Man.<sup>66</sup> Göransson's elaborate construction of associations culminates in a Swedish-Hyperborean translation of and commentary on the sibylline verses of the fourth *Eclogue* of Vergil, in which not only the Son of God born of a virgin from the Annunciation of Isaiah is lauded, as Göransson stresses, but, with the *regna Saturnia*, also the Messianic era, *Thores regering*, which *Lucina*, the *Liudesgunna*, would bring back again. The reign of the Apolline Odin could begin anew if the diabolic Midgard Snake was finally kept within bounds.<sup>67</sup>

## Conclusion

Göransson's grand theory had finally gilded the lily for the Germanic Veleda; as one of the many Nordic sibyls she had become a link in a chain of Christian

64 Göransson Johan, *Is atlinga, det är: De forma Götters, här uti Svea rike, bokstäfver ok salighets lära, tvåtusend tvåhundrad år före Christum, utspridde i all land* (Stockholm, Salvius: 1747).

65 Göransson, *De Yfverborna Atlingars, eller, Sviogöthars ok Nordmänners, Edda, II. Historia* 25, and idem, *De Yfverborna Atlingars eller Sviogöthars ok Nordmänners Patriarkaliska Lära*, Str. 37, 16.

66 See Aurelius Augustinus, *De civitate Dei libri XXII*, ed. B. Dombart – A. Kalb, 2 vols., CCSL 48 (Turnhout: 1955), Liber XVIII, c. 23, 613–614.

67 Göransson, *Is atlinga*, § 17, 91–105.

cryptoprophecies. Göransson's reflections found almost no interest outside Sweden and even there they ultimately went too far for most scholars. Even though the figure of Veleda would still prompt the fantasy of the Romantics of the early nineteenth century to special literary achievements—one need think only of Fouqué de la Motte's novel on Veleda<sup>68</sup>—the study of Germanic ancient history in the following decades approached her person with much more reserve. However, Veleda with her companions clearly illustrates how a figure that was comparatively poorly attested in ancient history could be treated in a period of intellectual history that is barely known today: she was turned into a screen onto which the historical, and often also nationally connoted, imagination of this era was projected, in an epoch that within a few decades had been confronted by such an abundance of new sources and materials that it was barely possible to keep track of them. With these preconditions, it is perhaps not surprising that attributes such as prophecy, ecstasy, seclusion, and solitude were turned into the structuring concepts of this imagination, with the aid of which the first prehistorians of the Germanic past believed they could master the excess of, in part, very heterogeneous phenomena. The archetype of a prophetess functioning in solitude was exactly suited to help link together a superabundance of historical phenomena that could hardly otherwise have been given such rich significance. That most of the lines of tradition presented as the result of this period's compilation activities were national-romantic wish-fulfilment rather than the result of archaeological proof, is self-evident; like so much else, they reflected the spirit of the times, which would only be definitively driven out by the Göttingen enlightenment under the aegis of August Ludwig Schlözer and his followers. However, it was precisely this euphoric spirit of discovery of the generation of scholars of the seventeenth to eighteenth century, with their near-unlimited reach across languages and disciplines, whose collections of material first made possible the ancient histories of later times.

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68 Fouqué de la Motte Friedrich, *Welleda und Ganna, in vier Büchern*, Altsächsischer Bildersaal 2 (Nuremberg, Schrag: 1818 [Reprint in idem, *Sämtliche Romane und Novellenbücher*, vol. 7 (Hildesheim: 1993)]).

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# ***Passer solitarius*: Tribulations of a Lonely Bird in Poetry and Natural History, from Petrarch to Buffon**

*Paul J. Smith*

For centuries, one of the most evocative symbols of solitude has been the *passer solitarius*, the ‘solitary sparrow’. This symbol has, as is well known, its origin in *Psalm* 101 (102). As a theme, it is primarily present in four types of discourse: psalm-exegesis, mysticism, poetry, and natural history. The presence of the *passer solitarius* in the first three discourses—biblical exegesis, mysticism, and poetry—is under-researched, although some case studies do exist. On the fourth discourse—natural history—nothing has been done. This also applies to the mutual interaction between these four discourses. This essay synthesises critically the research on the bird’s presence in the first three discourses, and gives special attention to the discourse of natural history and to the discursive intertwinement of the bird theme.

## **The *passer solitarius* in the *Emblems* of Joachim Camerarius**

The *passer solitarius* figures as emblem 83, entitled *Sylva placet Musis* (‘the forest pleases the Muses’), in the third ‘century’ (volume of one hundred emblems) of the four-part emblem series *Symbolorum et Emblematum Centuriae Quatuor* (1593–1604) by Joachim Camerarius the Younger (1534–1598).<sup>1</sup> This emblem [Figs. 17.1 and 17.2] can be read as a synthetic summary of what has been written on this particular bird theme and its context until then, and acts as a conduit for, and as a foreshadowing of, what will happen to the theme in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Like Camerarius’s other emblems, this emblem consists of two pages: one page displays the so-called *emblemata triplex* (i.e. the emblem’s *motto*, *pictura*, and *subscriptio*), and the other gives

<sup>1</sup> Camerarius Joachim, *Symbolorum et Emblematum ex volatilibibus et insectis desumptorum centuria tertia collecta* (Nuremberg, Johann Hofmann: 1596), Emblem 83. About the third volume, solely devoted to birds and flying insects, see Smith P.J., “Joachim Camerarius’s Emblem Book on Birds (1596), with an Excursus on America’s Great Seal”, in Enenkel K.A.E. – Smith P.J. (eds.), *Emblems and the Natural World* (Leiden – Boston, MA: 2017) 149–183.

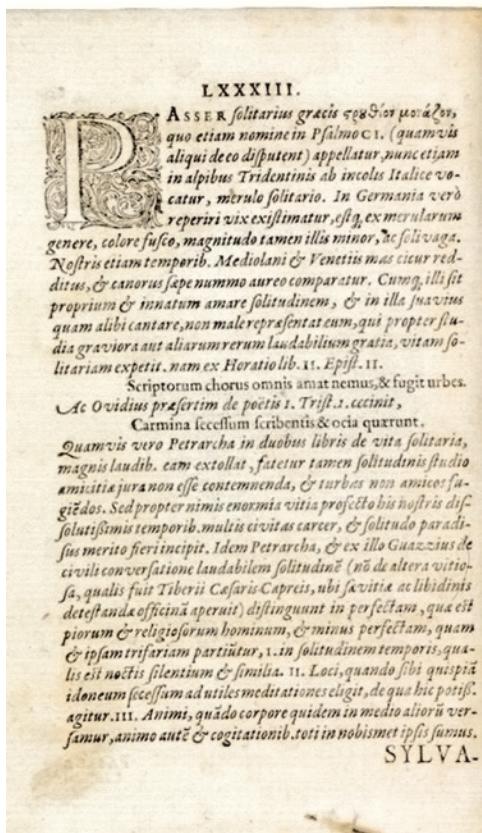


FIGURE 17.1

Anon. artist, *Commentary to Emblem 83, "Sylva placet Musis"*, in Joachim Camerarius, *Symbolorum et emblematum [...] ex volatilibus et insectis desumtorum centuria tertia* (Nuremberg, Johann Hofmann: 1596), fol. 82v. Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek (Res/L.eleg.m 1347 w-3).

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FIGURE 17.2

Hans Siebmacher, "Passer solitarius", in Joachim Camerarius, *Symbolorum et emblematum [...] ex volatilibus et insectis desumtorum centuria tertia* (Nuremberg, Johann Hofmann: 1596), fol. 83r. Engraving. 4°. Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek (Res/L.eleg.m 1347 w-3).

IMAGE © BAYERISCHE STAATSBIBLIOTHEK, MUNICH, RETRIEVED FROM [HTTPS://BILDSUCHE.DIGITALE-SAMMLUNGEN.DE/INDEX.HTML?C=VIEWER&BANDNUMMER=BSB00028235&PIMAGE=173&V=100&NAV=&L=NL](https://bilddsuche.digitale-sammlungen.de/index.html?c=viewer&bandnummer=BSB00028235&pimage=173&v=100&nav=&l=nl) (CREATIVECOMMONS).

Camerarius's learned literary explanation and moral application of the emblem. The *pictura*, made by Camerarius's illustrator, Johann Siebmacher, shows an indefinable little bird in a wild and deserted landscape. The title, or rather *motto*, of this emblem, *Sylva placet Musis*, is a quote from Petrarch—the rest of Petrarch's verse, not quoted by Camerarius, indicates which Muse is addressed more specifically, namely Poetry: 'urbs est inimica poetis' ('the town is the enemy of the poets')—which is also suggested in the emblem's *subscriptio*:

Secessus praeclari aliquid meditantibus apti.  
Namque boni in strepitu quid cecenisse queas?

Solitude is the right place for those who pursue something big.  
Because what good could one sing in the crowd?

Camerarius's learned prose text will serve as a starting point for an overview and discussion of the exegetical tradition and cultural history of the *passer solitarius*. The construction of the text follows a two-part structure: in the first part, the bird's naming, physical, and behavioural characteristics are discussed, whereas the second part gives the philosophical and moral implications of the bird. The main source for the information given in the first part of the emblem commentary is the *Historiae animalium liber III, qui est de avium natura* (1555) by Conrad Gessner (1516–1565). This book is part of the five-volume *Historia animalium* (1551–1587), a huge natural history encyclopaedia, in which in many thousands of closely printed pages in folio format can be found all that is known about animals at that time. In the following passage I indicate in italics which words are taken literally from Gessner—where it is remarkable that, as is often the case in Camerarius's other emblems, Gessner's name is not explicitly mentioned:<sup>2</sup>

*Passer solitarius* graecis στρουθίον μονάχον, quo etiam nomine in Psalmo CI. (quamvis aliqui de eo disputent) appellatur, nunc etiam in alpibus Tridentinis ab incolis Italice vocatur, *merulo solitario*. In Germania vero reperiri vix existimatur, est que ex merularum genere, colore fusco,

<sup>2</sup> For Gessner's presence in Camerarius's emblem books, see Enenkel K.A.E., "Camerarius's Quadrupeds (1595): A Plinius Emblematicus as a Mirror of Princes", and Hendrikx S., "Ichthyology and Emblematics in Conrad Gesner's *Historia piscium* and Joachim Camerarius the Younger's *Symbola et emblemata*", in Enenkel K.A.E. – Smith P.J. (eds.), *Emblems and the Natural World* (Leiden – Boston, MA: 2017) 91–148; 184–226.

*magnitudo tamen illis minor, ac solivaga. Nostris etiam temporibus Mediolani et Venetiis mas cicur redditus, et canorus saepe nummo aureo comparatur.*

Passer solitarius, in Greek στρουθίον μονάζον, by which term the bird was called in Psalm 101 (although some people debate this), and now in the Tridentine Alps, it is called ‘merulo solitario’ in Italian by the inhabitants. One thinks that in Germany the bird really is rarely seen. The bird belongs to the genus of the blackbirds and has a dark colour, but is lesser than the blackbirds, and is solitary. In our time, the male is often tamed by the Milanese and the Venetians, and its song is often compared to the golden mean.

First of all, Camerarius gives the Greek and Latin names of the bird in Psalm 101 (102), verse 8. I will use Camerarius’s references for a brief but necessary overview of the Psalm verse’s immediate context and ulterior early modern exegesis and translations. The Vulgate version is:

7 Similis factus sum pellicano solitudinis;  
factus sum sicut nycticorax in domicilio.  
8 Vigilavi, et factus sum sicut passer solitarius in tecto.<sup>3</sup>

But, as Camerarius indicates, there is disagreement about the identity and thus the naming of the bird.<sup>4</sup> This has to do with the ambiguity of the word *passer* (and the corresponding words in Hebrew, צִפּוֹר tsippôr tsippôr, and in Greek, στρουθίον), which signifies more generally ‘(little) bird’, and not specifically ‘sparrow’. Moreover, the adjective *solitarius* in the three languages does not indicate a particular bird species. Ideally, the modern English translation should be ‘a bird alone’ and not ‘a solitary sparrow’; the former suggests that it is a particular bird species related to the sparrow family *Passeridae*. This is indeed the direction in which Camerarius’s thoughts seem to go, because his next emblem is about the house sparrow (*Passer domesticus* or *Passer communis*).

The term *passer solitarius* as a species name is interpreted in different ways over the centuries, as is evidenced by the translations: sometimes it is an owl

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/vul/psa101.htm>. The 1611 King James Bible translates: ‘I am like a Pelican of the wildernes: I am like an owle of the desert. I watch, and am as a sparowe alone upon the house top’.

<sup>4</sup> There is also confusion about the two other birds: *pelican* is regularly understood as *cormorant* or *bittern*, and *nycticorax* is often translated as *owl* or *night heron*, or *bittern* again.

(because the context of the psalm verse suggests that it is night-time). John Calvin writes in his commentary that אַפּוֹר אַפּוֹר signifies 'bird', and that he is sure this bird is a *passer* (sparrow). He also explains why this sparrow is lonely, because it lost its spouse.<sup>5</sup> Calvin's interpretation had many echoes. The Protestant psalm translator Théodore de Bèze (Beza) (1519–1605) incorporates the theme of the death of a spouse in his psalm translation (1562):

Comme durant son vefuage  
 Le Passereau, sous l'ombrage  
 D'vn tect, couue ses ennuis:  
 Ainsi ie passe les nuicts.<sup>6</sup>

Just like the little sparrow, during its widowerhood, hides its sorrow under the shadow of a roof, thus do I pass my nights.

It is not clear why Beza translates *in tecto* as 'sous l'ombrage d'un tect'.<sup>7</sup> This translation is justified neither by the Latin preposition *in*, nor by the corresponding Hebrew preposition. This uncertainty seems to be recognised by the *Psautier de Genève* of 1679, which adapts the translation by leaving out 'd'un tect', but which replaces the sparrow with a turtledove, maybe in order to avoid the connotation of lasciviousness, a trait traditionally accorded to the sparrow:<sup>8</sup>

Comme, durant son veuvage,  
 La tourterelle, à l'ombrage,  
 Nourrit ses tristes ennuis,  
 Seul je passe ainsi les nuits.<sup>9</sup>

5 Calvin J., *In Librum psalmorum commentarius* [...], ed. A. Tholuch (Berolini: 1836), Pars II, 199.

6 *Les Pseavmes mis en rime françoise par Clement Marot et Theodore de Beze* (s.l., Jean de Laon pour Antoine Vincent: 1562).

7 In his translation of the Psalms of Marot and Beza, the Dutch translator Pieter Datheen comes to a comparable translation: Datheen Pieter, *De Psalmen Davids, ende ander lofsangen* (Heidelberg, n.pr.: 1566): 'So d'eensaem mussche moet waeken,/ In stilheit onder den daeken,/ So moet ick oock voor end naer,/ Wacker sijn met lyden swaer'. The two other Dutch Protestant psalm translators, Jan Uttenhove (1566) and Marnix of Saint-Aldegonde (1580), did not follow here Beza's translation.

8 In his influential *La Sepmaine* (1581), the French poet Du Bartas qualifies the sparrow with a sole epithet: *lascif*. Du Bartas Guillaume, *La Sepmaine*, ed. Y. Bellenger (Paris: 1994) 230, l. 645.

9 I quote: *Les Psaumes en vers François, retouchez sur l'ancienne version de Cl. Marot, et Th. De Beze, par M.V. Conrart* [...] (Paris, Estienne Lucas: 1680).

Just like the turtledove, during its widowerhood, feeds its sorrow in the shadow, thus do I pass my nights in loneliness.

Nowadays the psalm is still sung in this version. It is remarkable that a Catholic psalm translator, Philippe Desportes (1546–1606), also was clearly inspired by Beza:

Toute nuit gemissant ie veille a ma misère,  
Comme le passereau dolent et solitaire  
Sous vn toit hèbergé.<sup>10</sup>

The whole night through I am sighing, and I am awake with my misery,  
just like the little sparrow, sad and solitary,  
living under a roof.

Although the translations by Calvin and Beza were widespread in the Protestant world, the standard identification of the *passer solitarius* is the one proposed by Albertus Magnus (ca. 1200–1280) and quoted by Gessner:

Passer solitarius avis est nigra, (fusca), merula minor, canora: et dicitur solitarius, quia cum nullo sui generis unquam congregatur nisi tempore generationis.<sup>11</sup>

The *passer solitarius* is a black coloured bird, (dark), lesser than a blackbird, and a songbird. It is called solitary because it never lives together with birds of its own species except in times of mating.

It is clear that Albertus was thinking of a particular bird species, in all likelihood the blue rock thrush (*Monticola solitarius*), as seems to be confirmed by Gessner. This is also the bird species that, in the wake of Gessner, Camerarius had in mind. We will see later that Gessner's identification was not as unambiguous as Camerarius seemed to think, and that Gessner was well aware of this.

<sup>10</sup> Desportes Philippe, *Les C.L. Pseaumes de David* (Rouen, Raphaël du Petit Val: 1611).

<sup>11</sup> Albertus Magnus, quoted by Gessner Conrad, *Historiae animalium liber III, qui est de avium natura* (Zurich, Christopher Froschauer: 1555) 584.

### Petrarch: Philosophy and Poetry

In the second, non-ornithological part of his comment, Camerarius does not speak any more about the bird itself, but about what the bird symbolises, namely solitude. The main source here is not Gessner but Petrarch's *De vita solitaria*. The verse Camerarius takes from Horatius ('Scriptorum Chorus omnis amat nemus, et fugit urbes'—'The whole chorus of writers loves the forest, and flees the towns') is quoted by Petrarch himself in his *De vita solitaria*, immediately following his self-quotation: 'Silva placet Musis, urbs est inimica poetis'.<sup>12</sup> Very important are Camerarius's references to Petrarch's typology of solitude, or, more precisely, Camerarius's summary of a summary of Petrarch's typology—a summary made by Stefano Guazzo (1530–1593) in his treatise *Civil conversatione* (1574). On the basis of Petrarch and Guazzo, Camerarius distinguishes between:

a perfect solitude, that of the pious and devout people, and a less perfect one, which in turn can be divided into three parts, namely: 1. Solitude in time, for instance the silence of the night, and the like; 2. Solitude in place, in which we choose for ourselves a suitable retreat for useful meditation [...]; 3. Solitude in spirit, when we are with our body in the middle of others, but totally inward-looking with our mind and consciousness.

It is remarkable that Camerarius, despite his quotations from the work of Petrarch, and despite Petrarch's references to the muses and the poets, makes no mention of one of the most famous thematisations of the *passer solitarius*, namely Petrarch's Sonnet 226:<sup>13</sup>

Passer mai solitario in alcun tetto  
non fu quant'io, né fera in alcun bosco,  
ch'i' non veggio 'l bel viso, et non conosco  
altro sol, né quest'occhi ànn'altro obiecto.

Lagrimar sempre è 'l mio sommo diletto,  
il rider doglia, il cibo assentio et tòsco,  
la notte affanno, e 'l ciel seren m'è fosco,  
et duro campo di battaglia il letto.

<sup>12</sup> See Karl A.E. Enenkel's contribution to the present volume.

<sup>13</sup> In fact, Camerarius seems to be interested only in Petrarch's Latin poetry and prose, not in his Italian poetry.

Il sonno è veramente, qual uom dice,  
parente de la morte, e 'l cor sottragge  
a quel dolce penser che 'n vita il tene.

Solo al mondo paese almo, felice,  
verdi rive fiorite, ombrose piagge,  
voi possedete, et io piango, il mio bene.<sup>14</sup>

No sparrow on a roof, or beast in a wood  
was ever as lonely, since I cannot see  
her lovely face, and recognise no other sun,  
nor do my eyes seek any other object.

The height of my delight is always to weep,  
laughter is grief, wormwood and gall my food,  
my nights troubled, the clear sky dark for me,  
and my bed a harsh battlefield.

Sleep, as men say, is truly allied to death,  
and the heart derives from it sweet thought  
that keeps it still alive.

In all the world only you happy, kindly land,  
green flowering river-banks, cool shadows,  
possess the good I weep for.<sup>15</sup>

In this poem solitude is the *tertium comparationis* which links the bird to the poet, or rather his 'lyrical I', who mourns the death of his beloved Laura. Solitude is not a positive locus of meditation but a negative locus of melancholy and despair, which are rendered by the oxymora of the second strophe. The third strophe, announced by the oxymoron 'e duro campo di battaglia il letto', leads the reader to the topic of sleep, which should give consolation because it keeps Laura alive in dream and memory—consolation made impossible by the poet's insomnia. The fourth strophe, finally, recalls, by way of an apostrophe, the charming Vaucluse, where Laura and her memory are resting. The expressiveness of Petrarch's first line is enormous: it has inspired many poets, as we shall

<sup>14</sup> Petrarch, *Canzoniere*, ed. M. Santagata (Milan: 2004) 950.

<sup>15</sup> Petrarch, *The Complete Canzoniere*, trans. A.S. Kline, available from [http://people.virginia.edu/~j3k3t/petrarchkline.htm#\\_Toc12014037](http://people.virginia.edu/~j3k3t/petrarchkline.htm#_Toc12014037) (accessed: 20.02.2017).

see—and maybe even John Calvin, as he in his psalm commentary indicates the death of a spouse as the cause of the grief of the *passer solitarius*. However, strictly speaking, from the viewpoint of stylistics, the *passer solitarius* plays only a relatively small role in the first strophe of Petrarch's sonnet, and has no role at all in the other strophes. According to the terminology of stylistics, we are dealing here with a comparison in which the *passer solitarius* functions as the vehicle (*comparant*), and the poet as the tenor (*comparé*).<sup>16</sup> This equation is not worked out by Petrarch, but the thematic development in the rest of the poem will remain attached to the *passer solitarius*—as we will see in the poetic reception of Petrarch's sonnet.

### La Roque: A Baroque Follower of Petrarch

The reception of Petrarch's sonnet in Italian poetry is well mapped: the theme of the *passer solitario* can be found in the work of Luigi Pulci, Benvenuto Cellini, Giovanni Botero, Giordano Bruno, and Ambrogio Viale.<sup>17</sup> A highlight of this reception is a poem by Giacomo Leopardi (1798–1837), *Il Passero solitario* (*Canto XI*) (1835), about which much has been written.<sup>18</sup> In this poem, the theme of the *passer solitarius* is rewritten in a discourse that is typical of the Romantic period: by the singing, lonely bird the lyrical I is aware of his own loneliness in relation to the surrounding revelry, spring, and youth, which echo to him from afar—an awareness that makes him withdraw into himself, with fear for his future and nostalgia for his past youth. With the traditional tenor (the poet) and the vehicle (the bird) an interesting game is played. As Dina De Rentiis demonstrates, in this process the bird has primarily a ground of similitude with the poet: 'Oimè, quanto somiglia/ Al tuo costume il mio!' ('Ah,

<sup>16</sup> For the reader's convenience, I have adopted the working definitions given by Shaw M.L., *The Cambridge Introduction to French Poetry* (Cambridge: 2003) 211: The *tenor* (*comparé*) is 'the thing which is being compared in a metaphor or other comparison', and the *vehicle* (*comparant*) is 'the thing to which the *tenor* (*comparé*) of a metaphor or other comparison is being compared'. The similitude between tenor and vehicle is the above-mentioned *tertium comparationis* or *ground*.

<sup>17</sup> For these authors' reception of Petrarch's Sonnet 226, see Aquilecchia G., "Il passero solitario di Leopardi e un sonettodel Molza", *Italian Studies* 33, 1 (1978) 77–82.

<sup>18</sup> For a recent analysis of the poem, and an extensive bibliography, see Rentiis D. de, "Des Spatzens Kern—zur meta poetologischen Dimension von Giacomo Leopardis *Il Passero solitario*", in Ulrich M. – Rentiis D. de (eds.), *Animalia in fabula: interdisziplinäre Gedanken über das Tier in der Sprache, Literatur und Kultur* (Bamberg: 2013) 77, note 1 and 87–88.

how like your ways are to mine!'),<sup>19</sup> but in the second instance it has a ground of dissimilitude: 'Tu, solingo augellin, venuto a sera/ Del viver che daranno a te le stelle,/ Certo del tuo costume/ Non ti dorrai; che di natura è frutto/ Ogni vostra vaghezza./ A me [...] (You, lonely bird, reaching the evening of this life the stars grant you, truly, cannot regret your existence, since your every action is born of nature. But I, [...])—by contrast, the poet will continue to have to live with an overwhelming regret.

A special, but much less famous imitation of Petrarch is found in the French Baroque poet Siméon-Guillaume de La Roque (1551–1611), who in his collection *Amours de Phyllis* (1599) dedicates a sonnet to a solitary bird, of which these are the two quatrains:

Je suis le triste Oyseau de la nuit solitaire,  
 Qui fuit sa mesme espece et la clarté du jour,  
 De nouveau transformé par la rigueur d'Amour,  
 Pour annoncer l'augure au malheureux vulgaire.

J'appren à ces rochers mon tourment ordinaire,  
 Ces rochers plus secrets où je fay mon sejour.  
 Quand j'acheve ma plainte, Echo parle à son tour,  
 Tant que le jour survient qui soudain me fait taire.<sup>20</sup>

I am the solitary bird of the night,  
 Which flees from its own kind and from the light of the day,  
 Transformed once again by the rigours of Love,  
 In order to predict the future to unhappy people.

I teach my usual torment to these rocks,  
 These most secret rocks, where I dwell.  
 When I stop my complaint, Echo speaks in her turn,  
 Until the daylight comes, which silences me.

<sup>19</sup> Leopardi Giacomo, *The Canti*, trans. A.S. Kline, available from [http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Italian/Leopardi.htm#anchor\\_Toc38684160](http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Italian/Leopardi.htm#anchor_Toc38684160) (accessed: 20.02.2017).

<sup>20</sup> La Roque Siméon-Guillaume de, *Poésies: Amours de Phyllis et diverses Amours* (1590), ed. G. Mathieu-Castellani (Paris: 1983) 62–63. Mathieu-Castellani gives the poem's immediate intertext, which includes Jacopo Sannazaro's *Arcadia* (vii, 52) and some poems by Philippe Desportes. In this intertext, neither the expression 'solitary bird' nor Du Bellay's *Songe* (see below) is mentioned.

In this poem a confusing game is played with the tenor and the vehicle: should one read the first line as a comparison—‘Je suis *comme* le triste Oyseau de la nuit solitaire?’—or is it the bird, who is speaking about itself by way of a prosopopeia? This sought-after uncertainty is typical of Baroque poetry, where illusion can be reality, and vice versa.

Another characteristic of French Baroque lyricism lies in the hyperbolic enlargement of Petrarchan themes: what in Petrarch and in most imitators was a lovely little songbird is transformed into a screeching owl predicting an evil future; the roof and all signs of human habitation are gone; the scene has become a horrid wilderness. A love drama is also suggested (‘par la rigueur d’Amour’), but this is not worked out. In its place, the tercets develop a story about punished hubris—a story that probably should be read as a sequel to one of Joachim Du Bellay’s (1522–1560) apocalyptic sonnets, “Je vis l’oiseau qui le soleil contemple”, published in *Songe* (1558).

La Roque’s sonnet was written at the same time as Camerarius’s emblem *Sylva placet Musis*—it indicates how differently the themes of the *passer solitarius* can be worked out.

### San Juan de la Cruz and Carmelite Mysticism

As we have seen, Camerarius refers briefly to the highest category of *solitudo*: to be one of the holy men. In the years before the appearance of his emblem book, the *passer solitarius* became a popular symbol in mysticism, particularly in the mystique of the Carmelites. St. Teresa of Avila (1515–1582) refers to the bird of Psalm 101 in order to express her consciously chosen loneliness, which is necessary for her communication with God:

In this communication the desire grows, so also does the bitterness of that loneliness wherein the soul beholds itself, suffering a pain so sharp and piercing that, in that very loneliness in which it dwells, it may literally say of itself,—and perhaps the royal prophet said so, being in that very loneliness himself, except that our Lord may have granted to him, being a saint, to feel it more deeply,—“Vigilavi, et factus sum sicut *passer solitarius* in tecto”. These words presented themselves to me in such a way that I thought I saw them fulfilled in myself. It was a comfort to know that others had felt this extreme loneliness; how much greater my comfort, when these persons were such as David was! The soul is then—so I think—not in itself, but on the house-top, or on the roof, above itself, and

above all created things; for it seems to me to have its dwelling higher than even in the highest part of itself.<sup>21</sup>

The image plays a particular role in the work of the Carmelite San Juan de La Cruz (St. John of the Cross) (1542–1591).<sup>22</sup> According to legend, San Juan had written a treatise entitled *Tratado de las propiedades del pájaro solitario*—a book that was so controversial that San Juan destroyed it (by eating it, as the legend goes). Of this tract echoes can be found in some other works by San Juan that have been preserved. One of these echoes is the following:

The traits of the solitary bird are five: first, it seeks the highest place; second, it withstands no company; third, it holds its beak in the air; fourth, it has no definite color; fifth, it sings sweetly. These traits must be possessed by the contemplative soul. It must rise above passing things, paying no more heed to them than if they did not exist. It must likewise be so fond of silence and solitude that it does not tolerate the company of another creature. It must hold its beak in the air of the Holy Spirit, responding to his inspirations, that by so doing it may become worthy of his company. It must have no definite color, desiring to do nothing definite other than the will of God. It must sing sweetly in the contemplation and love of its Bridegroom.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Teresa of Avila. *The Life of St. Teresa of Jesus, of the Order of Our Lady of Carmel*, trans. D. Lewis, ed. B. Zimmerman (3rd ed. enl. London – New York, NY: 1904) 140. ‘Con esta comunicacion cresce el deseo y el estromo de soledad en que se ve con una pena tan delgada y penetrativa, que al pié de la letra me parece se puede entonces decir (y por ventura lo dijo el real Profeta, estando en la misma soledad, sino que como á Santo se la daria el Señor á sentir en mas ecesiva manera): *Vigilavi, et factus sum sicut passer solitarius in tecto*. Y ansí se me representa este verso entonces, que me parece lo veo yo en mí; y consuélame ver que han sentido otras personas tan gran estremo de soledad, cuanto mas tales. Ansí parece que está el alma, no en sí, sino en el tejado ó techo de si misma, y de todo lo criado; porque aun encima de lo muy superior del alma me parece que está’.

*Vida de Santa Teresa de Jesús*, ed. D. Vivente de la Fuente (Madrid: 1874) 177.

<sup>22</sup> The most extensive bibliography on the bird in San Juan I found in an article about the bird theme in Messiaen: Thurner M., “Olivier Messiaen: der mystische Vogel. Tiefenphänomenologie einer musikalischen Naturgestalt”, *Aufgang: Jahrbuch für Denken, Dichten, Musik* 5 (2008) 306–329. Also in Hastetter M.C. (ed.), *Musik des Unsichtbaren: Der Komponist Olivier Messiaen (1908–1992) am Schnittpunkt von Theologie und Musik* (St. Ottilien: 2008) 64–81.

<sup>23</sup> Saint John of the Cross, *The Collected Works*, trans. K. Kavanaugh and O. Rodriguez (Washington, DC: 1991) 94. ‘Las condiciones del pájaro solitario son cinco. La primera, que se va a lo más alto; la segunda, que no sufre compañía, aunque sea de su naturaleza;

Critics do not agree on the sources of San Juan's *pajáro solitario*. It has been suggested that the bird was inspired by Petrarch's *passer solitario*, but comparison does not provide any obvious similarities between both texts. One may also think of the phoenix as described in, among other works, the medieval bestiaries. Of this Christological bird *par excellence* (to which Camerarius also dedicates an emblem) it is indeed said that it has a solitary nature and does not have any specific colour, just like San Juan's *pajáro solitario*. It is also possible that San Juan, like Albertus Magnus, had in mind a specific bird species, namely the already mentioned blue rock thrush. This is convincingly shown by Enrique Sánchez Costa for four of the five characteristics of the bird:<sup>24</sup> the blue rock thrush always perches at the highest point, its behaviour is solitary, its singing is lovely, and it has no particular colour—the bird is not always bright blue, like the bird often depicted ideally; its colours are dependent on light, season, sex, and age.<sup>25</sup> This indefinability of colour led to confusion in the bird's determination until well into the eighteenth century, as we will see. On the third feature of the *passer solitarius* ('it holds its beak in the air'), Sánchez Costa's argument is less convincing, but here it can also be said that this third feature corresponds to the actual bird: its typical stance is upright with the beak pointed upward, as is shown in the picture by Olina [see Fig. 17.7].<sup>26</sup>

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la tercera, que pone el pico al aire; la cuarta, que no tiene determinado color; la quinta, que canta suavemente. Las cuales ha de tener el alma contemplativa: que se ha de subir sobre las cosas transitorias, no haciendo más caso de ellas que si no fuesen; y ha de ser tan amiga de la soledad y silencio, que no sufra compañía de otra criatura; ha de poner el pico al aire del Espíritu Santo, correspondiendo a sus inspiraciones, para que, haciendo así, se haga más digna de su compañía; no ha de tener determinado color, no teniendo determinación en ninguna cosa, sino en lo que es voluntad de Dios; ha de cantar suavemente en la contemplación y amor de su Esposo'. Giovanni della Croce, *Tutte le opere: Testo spagnolo a fronte*, ed. P.L. Boracco (Milan: 2010) n.p. (Google Books). For a longer version from his *Dichos de luz y amor*, see Thurner, 'Olivier Messiaen'.

<sup>24</sup> Sánchez Costa E., 'El pájaro solitario sanjuanista: una aproximación', *Rilce: Revista de Filología Hispánica* 24 (2008) 407–419.

<sup>25</sup> Buffon writes: 'Les couleurs de son plumage varient un peu dans les descriptions et sont probablement sujettes à des variations réelles d'un individu à l'autre, selon l'âge, le sexe, le climat, etc.' Buffon Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de, *Histoire naturelle des oiseaux*, vol. 3 (Paris: L'Imprimerie royale: 1775) 355.

<sup>26</sup> Sánchez Costa quotes Peterson's *Field Guide*: 'Habitat: Rocky desert regions and bare mountainsides [...] Nests in crevices in rocks, cliffs and buildings'; my quotations are taken from Peterson R. – Mountfort G. – Hollom P.A.D., *A Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe* (4th ed. London: 1983). But other passages from Peterson's *Field Guide* could be quoted accordingly: 'Male [...] deep blue-grey plumage; in winter looks blackish. Female bluish-brown above, paler below, finely barred with grey-brown. [...] Song is

Another source of inspiration has been suggested, namely mystical Sufism, more specifically from Persia. The similarities between the cited Sufist texts and San Juan are indeed striking, but they can also be caused by the universality of the theme of the lonely bird. The treatise of San Juan had a large resonance within Christian mysticism. In 1634 a Carmelite, a certain Johannes Ludovicus (ab Assumptione), published a treatise entitled *Passer solitarius: h.e. vita et functiones animae contemplativae*, in which the destroyed book of San Juan is not mentioned but has a distinctive echo. As well as in San Juan, in this work the reader is instructed as to how he should realise the contemplative life by directing his conduct following the properties of the *passer solitarius*; the difference with San Juan is that those properties are invented by the author and have nothing to do with any existing bird species.

As an example, we discuss the chapter “De coloribus pennum Passeris solitarii”. This chapter begins with an apology: the reader should not think that the colours of the bird are discussed here only because the author likes outward show and display. No, the outward colours reflect the inner beauty of the bird. Then, the author states that the *passer solitarius* has four colours: red, green, white, and an indefinable pale colour ('pallidum'), and he indicates briefly what these colours stand for.<sup>27</sup> Then, during ten long pages, each colour is explained separately, with many quotations from the Scriptures and the Church Fathers. These explications are not about the bird, nor are they about its supposed colours, but are about the virtues the colours stand for. And this is the way Johannes Ludovicus treats every single 'property' of the bird, throughout the whole book. It is clear that the ornithological reality, present in Albertus Magnus, Camerarius, and Juan de la Cruz, is completely absent in this writing. The ornithological reality returns in the natural history discourse, in which there is a reversal of the traditional pairing of tenor (man) and vehicle (bird). Man disappears from the discourse and the bird becomes the main topic—and occasionally the tenor, when the bird is personified, that is, when the bird as tenor is compared to man as vehicle.

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deliberate, loud and fluty [...] sings from rock, or in vertical display-flight'. What is said about another species of rock thrush is also applicable to the blue rock thrush: 'Behaviour shy and solitary; perches upright' (163).

<sup>27</sup> Ludovicus Johannes, *Passer solitarius: h.e. vita et functiones animae contemplativae* (Munich, Berg: 1634) 266.

### Pierre Belon and Conrad Gessner on the *passer solitarius*

What contemporary naturalists report about the *passer solitarius* is more ambiguous than Camerarius seems to suggest in his quotes from Gessner. In his *L'Histoire de la nature des oyseaux* (1555), Pierre Belon (ca. 1517–1565) devotes an entire chapter to the ‘passe solitaire’. According to his modern editor Philippe Glardon, this bird matches the alpine accentor (*Prunella collaris*)<sup>28</sup>—the illustration also corresponds to this species [Fig. 17-3]. For Belon this bird is certainly not identical to the blue rock thrush, which he knows well and to which he devotes another chapter.<sup>29</sup> Belon relates how he has come to identify his ‘passe solitaire’:

[...] c'est que les habitants des lieux abismeze entre les montagnes, trouuants vn certain oyseau faire son nid es precipices des rochers, l'ont iugé solitaire. Et pource que ce passage de l'escriture, qui est au Psalme de Dauid cent et vniiesme, ou il est dit, *Passer Solitarius in tecto*, est commun à plusieurs: tout ainsi leur a esté facile imposer tel nom à vn oyseau, qu'il cognoscent aimer à se tenir au desert.<sup>30</sup>

[...] for the inhabitants of the ruined [or precipitous] places in the mountains found a bird that makes its nest in the precipices of the rocks, and they thought it solitary. And because the biblical text David's Psalm 101, where it says *Passer Solitarius in tecto*, is well known to several people, it was easy for them to give this name to a bird which they knew loves the wilderness.

Belon admits that he has attempted to identify the bird in the Psalm. For this, he consulted a Hebraist named Loys Chesneau, about whom not much is known:

28 Belon du Mans Pierre, *L'histoire de la nature des oyseaux*, ed. P. Glardon (Geneva: 1997) 461.

29 Belon is the one who has given to this bird its actual French name: [...] que l'appellons de nom Françoys, Merle bleu, ce n'est pas à dire que l'ayons onc ouy nommer de ce nom Françoys, qui eust esté prononcé de quelque autre : mais pource que nous trouuants en la ville de Ragouse [Dubrovnik] en Esclauonië, avec les paisans desquels le vulgaire est de diverses langues, les vns parlants Italien le nommoient *Merlo Biauo*, les autres qui parlent Grec vulgaire le disoient *Petrocosiphō*, et ceux qui parlent Esclauon l'appellent simplement vn Merle'. Belon, *Histoire des Oyseaux* 316.

30 Ibidem 322.



FIGURE 17.3 Anon. engraver, "Alpine Accentor", in Pierre Belon du Mans, *Histoire de la nature des oyseaux [...]* (Paris, Guillaume Cavellat: 1555) 323. Woodcut, 2°. Los Angeles, CA, *The Research Library at the Getty Research Institute* (QL673.B45 1555).

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Il est d'opinion [...] que pour *Passer solitarius*, lon pourroit entendre tout oyseau solitaire: comme qui diroit, *Avis minimè gregalis*: ou si lon pouuoit dire *Avis soliuaga*.<sup>31</sup>

He thinks that the term *Passer solitarius* can signify every lonely bird, just as one can say *Avis minimè gregalis* [a not very social bird], or *Avis soliuaga* [a bird that loves solitude].

This is an important conclusion. From this moment on, natural historians no longer sought to identify the bird in Psalm 101, but rather wanted to know which bird species with the same or a similar name (*paisse solitaire*, *passer solitarius*,

<sup>31</sup> Ibidem 324.

*merle solitaire* ...) were described in Belon, Gessner, and their followers until the eighteenth century. Therefore, the *passer solitarius* constitutes an excellent case study to understand the early modern development of ornithology.

There are three bird species under discussion: the already mentioned alpine accentor and blue rock thrush, and the rufous-tailed rock thrush (*Monticola saxatilis*). The French naturalist Buffon affirms in Volume 18 of his monumental *Histoire naturelle*, published in 1775: 'En général l'histoire du *Merle de roche* est fort mêlée avec celle du *Merle bleu* et du *Merle solitaire*'<sup>32</sup> ('In general the [natural] history of the rufous-tailed rock thrush is very much mixed up with the histories of the blue rock thrush and the alpine accentor'). Buffon is right: whereas Belon knows the rufous-tailed rock thrush, Gessner long struggled with the identification of the three birds. In his *Historia avium* of 1555 he gives an unmistakable description and picture of the blue rock thrush [Fig. 17.4].<sup>33</sup> He devotes a chapter to the rufous-tailed rock thrush ('De caeruleo'); but, in this chapter there is occasionally confusion with the blue rock thrush. However, in his chapter "De rubecula saxatili" he gives the description and illustration of a skin which was sent to him by Franciscus Niger, an Italian correspondent from Chiavenna [Fig. 17.5].<sup>34</sup> This is unmistakably a male rufous-tailed rock thrush in transitional plumage, or a young specimen. Gessner identifies this bird not with the previously described rufous-tailed rock thrush, but wrongly with Belon's alpine accentor.<sup>35</sup>

In his *Icones avium* (1555)—a compendium with the illustrations from the *Historia avium*—in which he gives updates with his most recent information, we see that the rufous-tailed rock thrush's skin is still attributed to the 'Blauvogel'.<sup>36</sup> And in his *Icones* of 1560,<sup>37</sup> Gessner continues to hesitate:

<sup>32</sup> Buffon, *Histoire naturelle des oiseaux*, vol. 3, 351.

<sup>33</sup> Gessner, *Historia avium* (1555) 584.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem* 701.

<sup>35</sup> For the ornithological identifications in Gessner's *Historia avium*, see Springer K.B. – Kinzelbach R.K., *Das Vogelbuch von Conrad Gessner (1516–1565)* (Berlin: 2009). In their book, the authors do not address Gessner's *Icones*.

<sup>36</sup> Gessner Conrad, *Icones avium omnium, quae in Historia avium Conradi Gesneri describuntur* (1st ed. Zurich, Christoph Froschauer: 1555) 34.

<sup>37</sup> In their book, Springer and Kinzelbach do not address the two editions of Gessner's *Icones*. On these editions see Smith P.J., "Deux recueils d'illustrations ornithologiques: les *Icones avium* (1555 et 1560) de Conrad Gessner et les *Portraits d'oiseaux* (1557) de Pierre Belon", in Garrod R. – Smith P.J. (eds.), *Natural History in Early Modern France: Poetics of an Epistemic Genre* (Leiden – Boston, MA: 2018 (in print)).

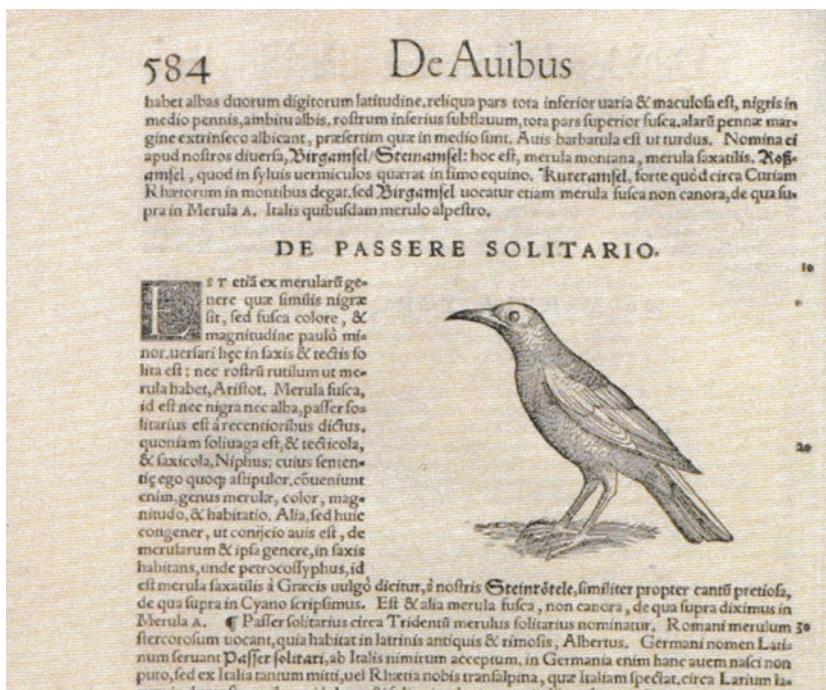


FIGURE 17.4 Anon. engraver, "Blue Rock Thrush", in Conrad Gessner, *Historiae animalium liber III*, qui est de avium natura (Zurich, Froschauer: 1555) 584. Woodcut, 2<sup>o</sup>. Zurich, Zentralbibliothek (vd 16 G 1730, Vischer C 505). IMAGE © ZENTRALBIBLIOTHEK, ZURICH, RETRIEVED FROM [HTTP://WWW.E-RARA.CH/ZUZ/CONTENT/PAGEVIEW/2120636](http://www.e-rara.ch/zuz/content/pageview/2120636) (CREATIVECOMMONS).

Rubecula or rather Merula saxatilis. With regard to its nature and almost also to its species, and to the sweetness of its song, the bird can be considered as being related to the family of the blackbirds, or to the passer solitarius, and *also to the Cyanous of Aristoteles, which nowadays the Greek call Petrocossyphon, which is "blackbird of the rocks", the same bird that in Ragusa [Dubrovnik] is called in Italian Merlo biauo*. The bird is different from the German Blauvogel.<sup>38</sup>

38 'Rubecula vel potius Merula saxatilis. Natura et specie fere, cantusque suavitate Merularum generi, aut Passeri solitario, cognata videri potest: *nec non Cyano Aristotelis, quam Graeci hodie Petrocossyphon, id est, saxorum incolam Merulam vocant: Italice quidam, ut Ragusii, Merlo biauo. Germani Blauvogel. colore differt*'. Gessner Conrad, *Icones avium omnium, quae in Historia avium Conradi Gesneri describuntur* (2nd ed. Zurich, Christoph Froschauer: 1560) 34 (see also 131). The phrases in italic are taken from Belon.



FIGURE 17.5 Anon. engraver, "Alpine Accentor", in Conrad Gessner, Historiae animalium liber III., qui est de avium natura (Zurich, Froschauer: 1555) 701. Woodcut, 2°. Zurich, Zentralbibliothek (VD 16 G 1730, Vischer C 505).

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(CREATIVECOMMONS).

Although the blue rock thrush is explicitly excluded, Gessner continues to quote Belon's chapter on the *merle bleu*. Gessner's manuscript notes in the margin of his personal copy, now in the Zentralbibliothek Zürich,<sup>39</sup> indicate that he continued to work on the bird's identification.

39 'Rubecula vel potius Merula saxatilis. Natura et ſpecie ferē, cantuſque ſuavitate Merularum generi, aut Paſſeri ſolitario, cognata uideri potest: nec non Cyano Aristotelis, quam Graeci hodie Petrocossyphon, id eſt, ſaxorum incolam Merulam vocant: Italice



FIGURE 17.6

Anon. engraver, "Avis kyburgensis (Alpine Accentor)", in Conrad Gessner, *Historiae animalium liber III.*, qui est de avium natura (Frankfurt: Johannes Wechel: 1585) 79[7]. Woodcut, 2°. Halle, Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Sachsen-Anhalt (G 1731).

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It was only much later that Gessner became familiar with the alpine accentor. In 1559 he received from Kyborg a skin (or a drawing) and a description of a bird that is unmistakably an alpine accentor. This description and illustration were only included in an appendix of the posthumous edition of the *Natura avium* of 1585, under the heading "Avis Kyburgensis" [Fig. 17.6].<sup>40</sup> The relationship with Belon's 'passe solitaire', however, was not made.

In his enormous *Ornithologiae hoc est de Avibus historiae libri* (1599–1603), one of Gessner's colleagues, the Italian Ulisse Aldrovandi (1522–1605), distinguishes between three species of *passer solitarius*: the first corresponds to the

quidam, ut Ragusii, Merlo biavo. Germani *Blawvogel*. colore differt'. See <http://www.e-rara.ch/zuz/content/pageview/528233> (accessed: 20.02.2017).

40 Gessner Conrad, *Historiae animalium liber III.*, qui est de avium natura (Frankfurt: Johannes Wechel: 1585) 796.

blue rock thrush (both male and female are illustrated), the second one (without illustration) corresponds to the rufous-tailed rock thrush, and the third one is the 'Passer solitarius Belonij'. However, the confusion continues to exist, for the description of the second bird contains elements that belong to the blue rock thrush, and vice versa, and Aldrovandi literally quotes Belon's 'passe solitaire' in Latin translation, without any further comment—which suggests that he did not know this bird personally.

Later manuals did not solve the problems. For instance, in his book on cage birds, *Vccelliera overo discorso della natvra e proprieta di diversi vccelli* (1622), Giovanni Pietro Olina (1585–1645) describes both rock thrushes: the blue rock thrush under the name *passera solitaria*, with a very precise illustration [Fig. 17.7], and the rufous-tailed rock thrush under the name 'Codiros Magire'.<sup>41</sup> He gives a lot of information about these birds (their physical properties, the ways to capture and keep them), but he says nothing on Belon's alpine accentor.

An exceptional case is the so-called *Feather Book*, which is kept at McGill University Library. This book, fabricated by a certain Dionisio Minaggio, the Chief Gardener of the State of Milan in 1618, is a collection of bird illustrations made up entirely of bird feathers.<sup>42</sup> The illustrations witness a profound knowledge of the local avifauna. On the title page of the collection figures a female blue rock thrush,<sup>43</sup> indicated by the inscription 'PASER SALVTARI' [Fig. 17.8]. This misspelling is done on purpose: it indicates that the bird brings good luck, and therefore merits a place on the book's front page, as it does on page 52 of the book, with a comparable misspelling: 'pasera salutaria'.

The first 'modern' ornithologists, Francis Willughby (1635–1672) and John Ray (1627–1705), knew both blue and rufous-tailed rock thrush species very well. During their voyage to Italy they dissected several specimens—detailed descriptions can be found in Willughby's *Ornithology* (1678).<sup>44</sup> But even these

41 Olina Giovanni Pietro, *Vccelliera overo discorso della natvra e proprieta di diversi vccelli* (Rome, Andrea Fei: 1622) fols. 13v and 46v.

42 For more information, see <http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/featherbook/birds1-30.html>: 'We have no idea why he made it, although it has been suggested that it might have been a project to occupy his staff during the long winter months and to use up some of the feathers left over from the birds used in the kitchen. It has also been suggested that the project may have been commissioned by the Governor. At the time, Milan was under Spanish rule and the Spaniards were familiar with feather art as it was done in Central and South America. Although the style and techniques used were quite different, it is possible that such works may have been an inspiration for this project'.

43 According to the identification by McGill Library.

44 After Willughby's death (1672) Ray published the Latin version of Willughby's *Ornithologia* in 1676; afterwards, he translated into English, actualised, and published this work under

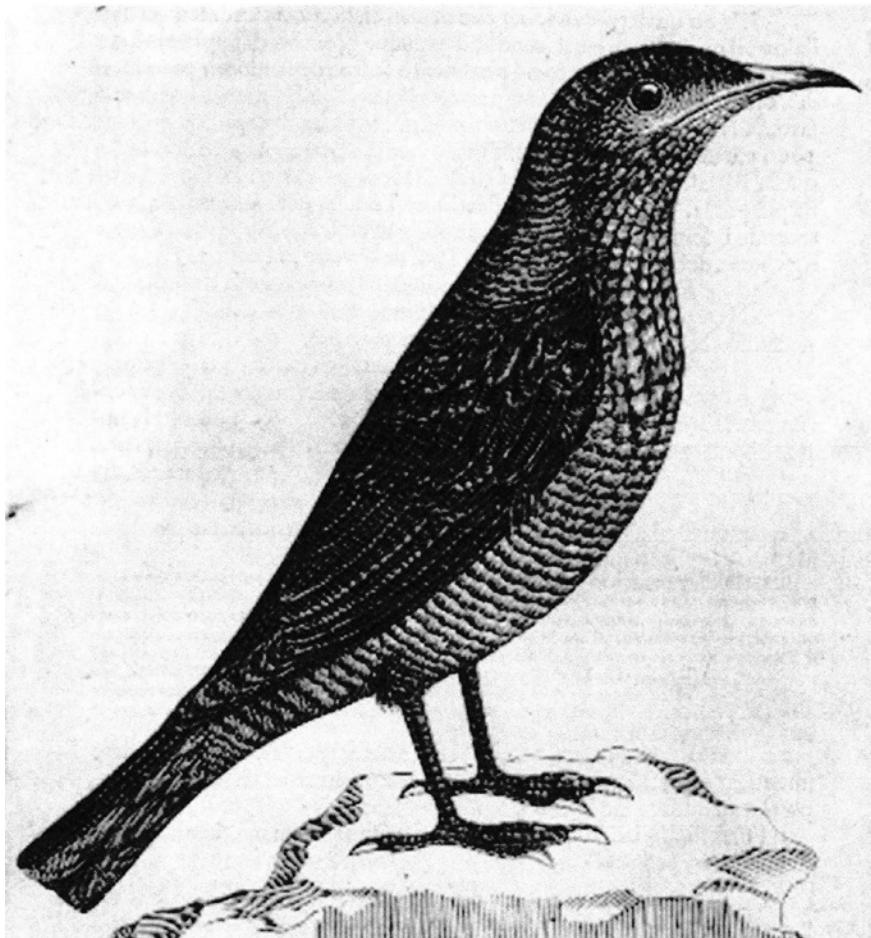


FIGURE 17.7 Anon. artist, "Passera solitaria," in Giovanni Pietro Olina, *Uccelliera overo discorso della natura e proprieta di diversi uccelli* (Rome, Andrea Fei: 1622) fol. 13v. Etching, 4°. Göttingen, Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek (4 ZOOL IX, 2690 RARA).

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FIGURE 17.8 Dionisio Minaggio, "Paser Salutari", Title page to Dionisio Minaggio, *The Feather Book* (1618). *Feathers*, 30.5 x 47.6 cm. Montreal, McGill University Library. Rare Books and Special Collections (folio ORHQ M66 cutter).  
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experienced ornithologists remained perplexed with Belon's bird. Thus, Ray formulates some contradicting conclusions. In his description of 'The greater Redstart of Olina [...]', Ray concludes:

I suspect that *Bellonius* his solitary *Sparrow* is the same with this bird, though the description answers not exactly in all things.<sup>45</sup>

—whereas he ends his chapter on 'The Blue-bird of Bellonius, *Passeri solitario congener* (Adrov.)' as follows:

For my part, to speak freely what I think, I judge the *Blauvogel* of *Gesner* to be the very same bird with the *solitary Sparrow*; but the *Caeruleus* of *Bellonius* to be a bird specifically different, and which I have not yet seen alive, though I have often seen its picture.<sup>46</sup>

### **Buffon's *merle solitaire***

Mathurin Jacques Brisson (1723–1806) is the first person after Belon to succeed in making a distinction between the three species.<sup>47</sup> He can do this because for his *Ornithologie* (1760) he relies on the enormous collection of René Antoine Ferchauld de Réaumur (1683–1757). On the basis of this collection, and on that of the ornithological literature (which is mentioned very accurately for each species), he distinguishes 64 (!) thrush species. Under the numbers 11, 30, and 37 he describes, respectively, the rufous-tailed rock thrush ('Le Merle de montagne'), the alpine accentor ('Le Solitaire'), and the blue rock thrush ('Le Merle bleu'). He does this in a dry description that is structured according to an established format: nomenclature, literature, origin, size, and physical description from beak to tail.<sup>48</sup> Because he only bases his descriptions on the stuffed

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the title *Ornithology* (1678). On this work, see Birkhead T.R. – Smith P.J. – Doherty M. – Charmantier I., "Willughby's Ornithology", in Birkhead T.R. (ed.), *Virtuoso by Nature: The Scientific Worlds of Francis Willughby FRS (1635–1672)* (Leiden – Boston, MA: 2016) 268–304.

45 Willughby Francis – Ray John, *The Ornithology* (London, A.C. for John Martyn: 1678) 197.

46 *Ibidem* 193.

47 Brisson M.J., *Ornithologia* [...] (Paris, Bauche: 1760). Linnaeus, for instance, only describes the blue rock thrush (*Turdus solitarius*) in his *Systema naturae* (10th ed. Stockholm, Lars Salvi: 1758) 170; the two other species are not mentioned.

48 In his introduction he evaluates the pros and the cons of this descriptive method: 'J'avoue que cela produit une monotonie, qui deviendrait insupportable dans un ouvrage fait pour être lù de suite'. Brisson, *Ornithologia* ixv.

specimens of Réaumur's collection, he gives no information about the birds' internal anatomy (as did Willughby and Ray), or about their behaviour.<sup>49</sup>

This does happen in the works of Brisson's rival and successor Georges-Louis Leclerc, Count of Buffon (1707–1788). Buffon published a ten-volume ornithological handbook under the umbrella title *Histoire naturelle des oiseaux* (1771–1786). Buffon is trying to transform his descriptions into literary texts, paying great attention to variation (as did Belon) and stylistic embellishment. Unlike his rival Brisson, he also pays attention to the behaviour of the birds. To distinguish himself from Brisson (and from Linnaeus, his other dragon) he emphasises the role of personal observation. He has indeed observed in the wild two of the three species. About the *merle solitaire*, which indeed turns out to be the alpine accentor, he writes: 'Il y en a tous les ans une paire sur le clocher de Sainte-Reine, petite ville de mon voisinage, située à mi-côte d'une montagne passablement élevée'<sup>50</sup> ('Every year a pair is nesting on the belfry of Sainte-Reine, a little town in my region, situated halfway up a fairly high mountain'). And about the rufous-tailed rock thrush ('le merle de roche'): 'On m'a apporté une femelle de cette espèce, prise le 12 mai sur ses œufs; elle avoit établi son nid sur un rocher dans les environs de Montbard, où ces oiseaux sont fort rares et tout-à-fait inconnus'<sup>51</sup> ('One has brought to me a female of this kind, caught 12 May on her eggs; she has made her nest on a rock in the neighbourhood of Montbard, where these birds are very rare and completely unknown'). The blue rock thrush is also known to him:

On retrouve dans ce merle le même fond de couleur que dans le merle de roche, c'est-à-dire, le cendré-bleu (mais sans aucun mélange d'orangé); la même taille, à peu-près les mêmes proportions, le goût des mêmes nourritures, le même ramage, la même habitude de se tenir sur les sommets des montagnes et de poser son nid sur les rochers les plus escarpés; en sorte qu'on seroit tenté de le regarder comme une race appartenant à la même espèce que le merle de roche; aussi plusieurs Ornithologistes les ont pris l'un pour l'autre.<sup>52</sup>

One finds in this merle the same background colour as in the rock thrush, i.e. the blue ash colour (but without any mixture of orange); the same size, almost the same proportions, the taste for the same foods, the same song, the same behaviour of perching on the tops of the mountains and

49 Except for some isolated remarks about their breeding places.

50 Buffon, *Histoire naturelle des oiseaux*, vol. 3, 360.

51 *Ibidem* 353.

52 *Ibidem* 355.

making her nest in the crags; so that one would be tempted to look at it as a race belonging to the same species as the rock thrush. Therefore, many ornithologists took one for the other.

Nevertheless, this knowledge advantage does not keep Buffon from taking a lot of material from his colleagues, not by quoting these authors verbatim, as most of his predecessors did, but by adapting their text to his own text, as can be seen in the next example:<sup>53</sup>

Belon

le Roy Françoys amateur et curieux  
des choses vertuëuses, en a  
autresfois tant estimé le chant, qu'il  
s'en delectoit autant ou plus que de  
nul autre oyseau.

il chante aussi bien la nuit comme  
le iour, au moins quand il voit la  
clarté de la chandelle.

King François, lover and searcher of  
virtuous things, used to appreciate  
the song of this bird so much that  
he loved it as much as, or even more  
than any other bird.

It sings at night as well as during  
the day, if only it sees the light of a  
candle.

Buffon

on sait que le roi François I.<sup>er</sup> prenoit  
un singulier plaisir à l'entendre,

et ils se mettent à chanter au milieu de  
la nuit, si-tôt qu'ils voient la lumière  
d'une chandelle

It is known that King François I was  
especially fond of the bird's song.

And they start singing in the middle of  
the night, as soon as they see the light  
of a candle.

53 This practice can also be seen in Buffon's description of the honey buzzard (*Pernis apivorus*), which is a rewriting of Willughby's and Ray's description of the bird. See Charmantier I. – Johnston D. – Smith P.J., "The Legacies of Francis Willughby", in Birkhead T. (ed.), *Virtuoso by Nature: The Scientific Worlds of Francis Willughby FRS (1635–1672)* (Leiden – Boston, MA: 2016) 360–385, at 381.

One of Buffon's embellishments is a result of his general tendency to anthropomorphise the birds: his birds are endowed with human characteristics:<sup>54</sup> thus, regarding the solitary bird's song, Buffon remarks: 'très-flûté, mais un peu triste, comme doit être le chant de tout oiseau vivant en solitude' ('very fluty, but a bit sad, as should be the song of a bird that lives in solitude'). And: 'un oiseau solitaire sent plus, et plus profondément qu'un autre' ('a solitary bird feels more, and more profoundly than any other bird').

The bird is solitary, except during mating season: then, not only do they look for the company of man, but they behave like true philosophers who know how to realise solitude not far from the madding crowd, but within:

A cette époque non-seulement le mâle et la femelle se recherchent, mais souvent ils quittent de compagnie les sommets agrestes et déserts où jusque-là ils avoient fort bien vécu séparément, pour venir dans les lieux habités, et se rapprocher de l'homme. Ils sentent le besoin de la société dans le moment où la plupart des animaux qui ont coutume d'y vivre, se passeroient de tout l'Univers: on diroit qu'ils veulent avoir des témoins de leur bonheur, afin d'en jouir de toutes les manières possibles. A la vérité ils savent se garantir des inconvénients de la foule, et se faire une solitude au milieu de la société.<sup>55</sup>

At this time not only are the male and the female looking for each other, but often they leave together the rough and deserted summits where previously they had lived separately very well, to come to populated areas, and closer to man. They feel the need for society at the moment when most animals who use to live there, could do without the entire universe: it looks as if they want to have witnesses of their happiness, in order to enjoy it in all possible ways. The truth is that they know how to avoid the disadvantages of a crowd and to create for themselves a solitude in the middle of society.

This last sentence seems to come directly from the Petrarchist discourse on solitude.

54 Another example of anthropomorphism is Buffon's description of the toucan. See Smith P.J., "On Toucans and Hornbills: Readings in Early Modern Theology from Belon and Buffon", in Enenkel K.A.E. – Smith P.J. (eds.), *Early Modern Zoology: The Construction of Animals in Science, Literature and the Visual Arts* (Leiden – Boston, MA: 2007) 75–119, at 111.

55 Buffon, *Histoire naturelle des oiseaux*, vol. 3, 359.

## Conclusion

Buffon constitutes the last step of a long development. In this development the bird is first the vehicle of the lyrical I—whose identity, incidentally, can vary greatly, from the Psalmist to Petrarch and Leopardi for poetry, to Petrarch again, and to Camerarius for philosophy, and to San Juan for mysticism. In the second instance, from Albertus Magnus on, the bird is introduced as a topic into natural history, becoming the subject of ornithological speculation. Belon's initial identification of the species is only partly understood during the next generations: the most reputed ornithologists—Gessner, Aldrovandi, Willughby, and Ray—try unsuccessfully to identify the bird. Finally Brisson and Buffon succeed in identifying the *passer solitarius*. And Buffon, in describing the bird anthropomorphises it by introducing the philosophical discourse on solitude into the discourse of natural history. Thus, the usual construction tenor-vehicle is inverted: man is not compared with the bird, but the bird with man—the bird being the tenor, and man the vehicle.

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